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# CONCERNING PRAYER

ITS NATURE, ITS DIFFICULTIES  
AND ITS VALUE

BY

THE AUTHOR OF 'PRO CHRISTO ET ECCLESIA'

|                   |                 |                   |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| HAROLD ANSON      | LEONARD HODGSON | C. H. S. MATTHEWS |
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## INTRODUCTION

IN all the Churches of late there has resounded a call to Prayer. It has met with singularly little response. The reason is not far to seek. The present generation is ready to respond to a call for high service—that has been demonstrated by the War—but the times do not allow men to put thought and effort into anything unless they are convinced that it is well worth while. And at the back of most men's minds there is the belief, more or less clearly defined, that Prayer is an activity the value of which is so open to question, that for the men and women who have to carry on the world's work it decidedly is not worth while; it may safely be left to ministers and monks and to pious ladies who have nothing else to do.

By many even of the more religiously-minded to-day the whole conception of Prayer is felt to be full of perplexing questions. Can we believe in Providence at all; or in what spirit can we pray to the Creator of a world so full of misery? Has Prayer any meaning in a Universe governed by universal Law? If God wills our good and knows our needs, why tell Him of them in Prayer? What practical results ought

we to expect from Prayer? What ought we to think of God's relation to human sin and to the Power of Evil in the world? The Mystics—have they anything to teach us? What are we to say of the Old Testament and its teaching in regard to God and man? What bearing on actual life have the rites and practices of Christian Worship?

The conclusion of Peace will leave Europe for many years face to face with economic, political and social problems of unexampled difficulty; and a solution of these will have to be attempted by nations financially exhausted, vitally weakened and depressed by the acute moral and psychological reaction which, humanly speaking, must necessarily follow an epoch of intense strain. Nothing but the sober determination, the quickened insight and the disinterested devotion, due to the permeation of society by some great and creative spiritual force, can avail to meet the situation. *Veni Creator Spiritus*. In those who really believe in God the urgency of the need begets a presumption that it will be met—but not necessarily in the way in which any of us expect. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and "in an hour that ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

The possibility of Moral and Religious Revival is being talked of and worked for in all the Churches. The danger is that when it comes they will ignore, or even strive to quench, the Spirit, because it appears first in some unexpected quarter or expresses itself in some unfamiliar forms. It is probable, indeed, that a genuine Religious Revival would confound the cherished

theories of many of those who have most to say about it. "Woe unto you that desire the Day of the Lord." It will mean the disappearance of much that is prominent in conventional religion, along with the emergence of much that is new and the revivification of much that seems now dead. And it will demand that men bring to the solution of the problems of life not only good intentions and exalted emotions, but enterprise and courage, steady resolution and disciplined intelligence.

At such an epoch the duty of the Churches is not to attempt to call down fire from Heaven or to prescribe to the Holy Ghost what should be His next effort. It is to "prepare the way of the Lord," to help men to an attitude of mind that will enable them to recognise the Spirit when He comes, and to be themselves receptive and responsive to His influence. And in the main this means recalling men to the contemplation of things eternal and to the realisation of God's love and power which is the essence of true Prayer. On a clear recognition of this more than on anything else depends the question whether organised efforts like a National Mission will do good or harm.

But if this be true it entails upon the Churches another duty, that of clear thinking about the perplexities men feel as to the nature and value of Prayer. Unless along with the summons to Prayer it is made evident to men why and in what way it is reasonable to pray, the exhortation to do so is likely too often to fall on deaf ears. Doubtless the clarification of ideas and the removal of intellectual difficulties in itself will

do no more than the elaboration of machinery to produce a revival in Religion, but the failure to face this task may well make a revival impossible within the Churches. Yet nothing is more obvious than the fact that the majority even of keen Christians have no very clear ideas of the answers to be given to the questions which are most frequently being asked to-day. Nor is it certain that all those who possess clear ideas are in possession of ideas which are also true.

In this volume a lady, three laymen, two parish clergymen, two clerical dons—all Anglicans—a Wesleyan theological tutor, a Congregational minister, and an American professor belonging to the Society of Friends, put forward some thoughts which are the result of a sustained corporate effort to clear up their own ideas on this important matter. Most of them have been able to meet regularly at a series of conferences in which subjects were discussed, and essays previously drafted were frankly criticised, to be rewritten and again discussed at later meetings. Besides the actual writers of the essays, the conferences were regularly attended by Miss M. E. Campbell, by whom the Indices have been compiled, by Miss M. S. Earp and occasionally by other friends, whose presence contributed a valuable element to the discussions.

That so many fellow-workers in such a field, approaching from so many different points of view, should have reached unanimity on all these subjects was not to be expected. All through they have endeavoured neither to establish nor to defend positions

but simply to follow truth, and in seeking truth together each has learnt much from others. But differences of opinion, even on important points, have not entirely disappeared. Each writer is therefore finally responsible only for what occurs in his own contribution.

The writers are under no illusion as to their personal competency to plumb to the depths the great matters which they have essayed to treat. But frank discussion between men and women inheriting different religious traditions, and mutual criticism in an atmosphere of corporate devotion and spiritual fellowship, seem to help the individual to a wider and deeper vision than he would be capable of attaining alone. Believing therefore that they have themselves learnt much, they hope that they may be found to have something to offer to others who in these days are feeling the perplexities of existence, to help them to lift up their hearts with a greater confidence towards the Source of all light, of all power and of all consolation.

B. H. S.

L. D.

CUTTS END, CUMNOR,

*February 1916.*

## NOTE TO SECOND EDITION

LIEUTENANT A. C. TURNER, the Author of Essay XII., fell in the service of his country near Arras on 16th January 1918.

I

# GOD AND THE WORLD'S PAIN

BY

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# I

## GOD AND THE WORLD'S PAIN

### FAITH, PRAYER AND SUFFERING

"ALL things are possible to him that believeth." But in Europe to-day, as thousands of the best and noblest are being daily added to a casualty list which already exceeds ten millions, and when the fate of Belgium seems fortunate beside that of Serbia and Armenia, it seems to many that all things indeed are possible except belief in a God of Love.

At the beginning of the War there was in all countries, most of all, I am told, in Germany, a sudden rush to the Churches for prayer—to the God of Battles. That rush has long ago ceased, and of those who persevere, how many are really deprecating on behalf of some loved one the vengeance of a God of Wrath? How many still pray to a God of Love, but do so in doubt rather than in trust? Yet, to our Lord, prayer is less petition than uttered trust. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." To Him the efficacy and value of prayer was proportionate to the completeness of the trust it implies. "When ye pray, believe that ye receive and ye shall have." With uncompromising audacity He teaches that if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed we can root up mountains. Believe and accomplish the incredible. Is this raving lunacy or is it true? The

question is vital. For if it is true it is the most important of all truths.

There was, it would seem, a moment when, in face of the evident triumph of the power of evil in the world, the Master Himself hesitated. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The twenty-second Psalm, from the opening verse of which the words are taken, ends on a very different note—the note of triumph and exultation. Hence some scholars have supposed that to our Lord's mind those words—according to our earliest Gospel the last articulated utterance of the dying Christ—recalled to His mind, as it were in epitome, the whole Psalm with its movement through despair to the joy of victory. I prefer myself a simpler interpretation. I believe that to Him as to so many of His followers it was given to drink to the very dregs the cup of desolation, and that the consciousness of triumph was not enjoyed by Him on this side of the grave. In any case, the passage tells that the Master Himself had passed in heart and mind, as well as in body, through the valley of the shadow of death—"the iron entered into his soul."

He had taught that not one sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Was not such confidence completely disproved by the final event of His own life? We might indeed be tempted to dismiss offhand our Lord's whole conception of an overruling Providence as the kind of view which could only be entertained by one who had lived an idyllic life in quasi-cloisteral seclusion removed from all real contact with the evil of the world. But there is no reason to believe that Palestine under the Herods offered conspicuous opportunities for such an idyllic life. Moreover, the perception of the reality of evil is at least as conspicuous in our Lord's teaching as is the emphasis on the Providence of God. If Christ taught the goodness of God and the love of God with more persistence

and clearness than any who preceded Him, He did so with the explicit recognition that there is constantly operating in the world a Power or powers of evil hostile to, and always endeavouring to thwart, the Divine Goodness.

In traditional popular theology the spiritual principle of evil has come to be represented in a mythological form. The Devil of popular theology and religious art—a grotesque and absurd figure—has been laughed out of existence by the ordinary educated man. Moreover, the age which is passing away has been an age of long peace, characterised by an immense increase of material prosperity, and in addition by very real, if somewhat over-advertised, political reform and humanitarian advance. It has been possible, at least among the more comfortable classes, to underestimate the reality and importance of the forces of evil in the world. That mistake is no longer possible. We are being forced to recognise that, like many other ancient institutions, the conception of the Power of Darkness in the world needed not to be abolished but reformed. It was never very plausible, it is now quite impossible, to speak of the Divine Providence as an overruling influence which guarantees that, all appearance to the contrary, whatever happens in this world is somehow good. Such a doctrine would imply that the Kingdom of God had already come. But that is emphatically not the teaching of the New Testament. The Kingdom of God, the state of things, that is, when "His Will is done on earth, as it is in Heaven," is always represented in the New Testament as something which is, indeed, certain to come, but which has not come yet; the beginning of it may be already here but decidedly "the end is not yet."

We may not, then, dismiss to the land of beautiful dreams that faith in God taught and lived in by our Lord without studying more exactly His teaching as to the nature of the rule of Providence on earth. So

doing we find that essentially it comes to this, God's Providence is conceived of in terms of battle. It is as though God might be compared to a General, who is indeed certain of ultimate victory, but who knows that the victory will only be attained by long and severe fighting and at the cost of enormous losses. But, on the other hand, the analogy of the General breaks down in one essential particular. The human General thinks in terms of companies and battalions : his aim is the victory of the army as a whole. Individual losses, partial and local reverses are just so much sheer loss, regrettable but inevitable, to be written off the total account like bad debts from a tradesman's ledger. But the mind of God has not these anthropomorphic limitations. He thinks not only in terms of battalions but also in terms of individuals, and His victory consists, not merely in the advance of the army as a whole, but also in the power to transform temporary and local losses and reverses into actual gains. Evil is evil and loss loss, but God has the power out of and through the evil and the loss to bring good and gain, just as the farmer can make the filth of the midden the source of renewed fertility to his land.

The Danish philosopher Höffding, in a famous phrase, has summed up the essence of religion as "belief in the Conservation of Value," that is, as the conviction that good in the moral sphere, like energy in the physical, can never be destroyed, but only transformed, so that what appears to be lost inevitably returns in another form. But Christianity is more than a belief in the Conservation of Value ; it is above all a belief in the Augmentation of Value. It is the belief that the whole creation will ultimately be redeemed, that the Golden Age is to be looked for not in the past but in the future, and that whenever any good thing seems to perish there will appear to take its place, not merely an equivalent good, but some far better thing. Through the whole New Testament

runs this note ; after tribulation, restoration, after Crucifixion, Resurrection, after Armageddon the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of Heaven. "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Christianity is not, as Goethe called it, the "worship of sorrow." It worships not the dying but the ascended Christ. It is the one religion which believes that evil can be conquered, that sorrow can be turned into joy, and that those whose sins are as scarlet can be washed whiter than snow—all things being transmuted through and by and in the power of the Spirit of God revealed in Christ. "Behold I make all things new."

It follows that resignation to the Will of God is not, as is commonly supposed, a characteristically Christian virtue ; though it is often the best that most of us can attain to. Resignation implies regret, but the acceptance of the decision of One who loves us as well as we do ourselves and knows far better what is good for us, is not a matter for regret. When Christ prayed, "Nevertheless not my will but thine be done," He was not reluctantly accepting the second best. Not resignation, then, but confidence, is the characteristic Christian attitude.

This is what the Christian means by faith. Is that its right name ? Or would Delusion be the better word ?

"Faith," says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "is the giving substance to things hoped for, it is a deliberated judgment about things unseen." It is emphatically not irrational, yet it is not purely intellectual. It is a commitment of the whole man. On its warmly personal side it is loyalty and devotion to leader or cause, on its sternly moral side it is the courage which rises higher in the hour of darkness, in its purely intellectual aspect it is the progressive verification of a hypothesis, reasonable but as yet unproved.

But, in so far as belief in the goodness of God is a purely intellectual hypothesis, can we say that it is

in process of verification? Is it not rather one that is in process of being disproved?

Sin and suffering are always with us. The problem of evil did not first come into existence in August 1914, and the fact that the sufferings of to-day are on so vast a scale in no way alters the intrinsic nature of the problem, it only forces it upon our attention. To the Christian philosopher the death of a single innocent child presents as great a difficulty as the massacre of millions. It is the existence of any evil *at all*, not the extent of the evil, which challenges the belief in the goodness of an Infinite God.

If the Power behind the Universe is a conscious intelligence at all, it must and can only be an intelligence to which the infinitely little and the infinitely great are equally and simultaneously present to consciousness. The Power which upholds the Universe of immeasurable distances, which we survey through the telescope, is equally responsible for the infinitesimally organised delicacy of the world which the microscope reveals. Human intelligence is limited by the capacity of the human brain. It can only attend to, it can only clearly grasp a limited number of issues at a time. The same man cannot at the same time attend equally to big things and to little. The chief of the General Staff may have a clear survey of the position as a whole, he may even perhaps know where every single battalion and even company is, he cannot know the character of every individual soldier. On the other hand, a sergeant may know the idiosyncrasies of every soldier in his own platoon, but he cannot have the same grasp of the fortunes of the whole campaign. But God is not so limited. To God, if there be a God at all, the movements of millions must necessarily be no more and no less clearly known than the fate of a single sparrow that falls to the ground. And if God is really good, a case of petty bullying in an infant school is as real a problem as the devastation of Europe.

The contrary notion is plausible only in so far as our imagination necessarily leads us to think of God under human analogies, as if He were a merchant who deals only in wholesale quantities. If, then, the problem is one which admits of a solution at all, the solution must be one which holds good equally in the field of world-history and in that of the individual life.

At any time, but especially in a time like this, a book on the meaning of Prayer is one in which the problem of suffering must be fairly faced. But this mystery of mysteries cannot be lightly penetrated, and no one but a fool will profess to supply any cut-and-dried solution. I would say then at once that it has not been given to me to surprise the secret which has from the beginning baffled the best and wisest of mankind. What I have to say contains little that is new. It is all to be found in the New Testament. Yet I have seemed to myself under the stress of the present crisis to have seen things in the New Testament which I had not seen there before or had seen less clearly ; so I venture to write it down, in the hope that it may help some others to read that book with different eyes.

In the New Testament no pretence is made that the solution put forward is what a philosopher would call a complete solution, for it is one which, it is suggested, must be accepted in the last resort by faith and not by sight. But faith, in the New Testament, does not mean belief in that which is unreasonable, but in that which is reasonable but not quite proved. That is to say, the New Testament gives what a philosopher would call a "provisional solution." But a solution which from a purely philosophical standpoint is only a provisional solution, is not therefore, I would submit, an unsatisfactory one. In the very nature of the case no more is possible. For, unless we dogmatically rule out the possibility of any life beyond the grave and of any sphere of existence beyond our human ken, it is clear that it is improbable that the facts before us are suffi-



ciently representative to make a certain induction possible. Moreover, as will be shown later, much of the heroism, the adventure, and the nobility of life would be impaired if we saw all this as clearly here as we hope to do hereafter.

### LIVES CUT SHORT

In the first place, let me address myself to a question which is being asked in every village, I had almost said in every home, in Europe. Every day we hear of young lives cut off in their prime; every week we hear of some great-hearted men, admirably fitted to do great and noble service in a world which is all too empty of men willing and able to perform such service, taken away with all their possibilities of good unrealised. We comfort ourselves with various reflections. A noble death in a good cause we may reflect can never be wholly evil—*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*: and all who believe in immortality may take comfort from the conviction that the individual himself is enjoying his reward in a better world. But such a belief, however firmly entertained, can never remove our sense of loss and waste. Whatever may be the case with the heroic dead, *we* are the poorer for their loss. With them it may be well, but this world seems infinitely the poorer for the lack of them and of all that they might have done. Which of us has not in mind instances of men of quite exceptional promise cut off thus with all that promise unfulfilled, all those possibilities unrealised?

To this problem, as I said before, I know of no cut-and-dried and finally satisfactory answer. But there is one reflection which has seemed to bring much light to my own mind. I mean the reflection that the life of the Founder of Christianity Himself was pre-eminently the life of one uniquely endowed with the possibility of doing good in the world, who was nevertheless cut off in His prime at the very beginning of a career of work of unparalleled value to His race. Given twenty, thirty,

or forty years of active work, and there seems to be no limit to the influence for good which a great and noble life may exercise. The life of Thomas Arnold and the moral revolution he introduced into English education is a case in point. Other instances of what a single good man can accomplish will occur to every one. We cannot help asking, what could not our Lord have done had He lived on earth to a ripe old age—with His unique insight into moral and religious issues, with His matchless power of forcible and clear expression, His magic gift of personal influence, His power to educate and to inspire. And this *would* have happened had the Pharisees been just a trifle more open-minded, had the Sadducees been only a little less apprehensive of popular movements which might impair their own privileges, had not Pilate, like many a statesman before and since, failed just a little in moral courage in the face of popular pressure—and any one or all of these conditions might quite easily have obtained. In that case our Lord would have worked and taught and trained men to carry on His work for another thirty or forty or even fifty years. And the result of such a life's work no one can estimate.

But the forces of evil in the world were strong enough to prevent this. And the fact that the crime was committed which cut short this life of absolutely unique possibility and promise, was a real triumph of the power of evil over good. But it was not a final triumph. The power of God was able not merely to defeat the object of the crime, but to make the crime itself the very means of its own defeat. The Cross which was intended to cut short, and which for the moment seemed to have succeeded in cutting short, His career of good, has proved to be the very means by which its success has been assured. For it is precisely the fact that He was crucified which has given Him His power over men.

The case of Christ is a test case. No doubt, even

the noblest of the men we know are men of imperfect lives whose best actions are determined by motives largely mixed ; and soldiers are no exception to this rule. Yet we must affirm that any man who voluntarily and readily gives his life for the sake of a cause which he believes to be righteous, is, just in so far as he is purely and consciously doing this, following the example of Christ. The premature death of such an one is a thing evil and to be deplored, the circumstances which have brought it about are a very real triumph of the power of evil in the world, and the exact and particular possibilities of good which their death has cut off are lost and gone for ever. But, in view of the test case of the death of Christ, I feel that we may yet have a sure confidence that, although the particular line of good work which we hoped for and looked for will not be done in the precise way in which it could and would have been done by them, it will not therefore be left undone. How this result will be achieved we cannot see—neither could the original disciples of our Lord. They at first, like us, saw only the blasting of all their hopes and the complete loss of high and noble possibilities—"We hoped," said they, "that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." Let us, then, as we mourn the loss of some of whom we too had hoped that they would have done much to redeem their generation, take courage from the experience of the first disciples. A noble life culminating in a heroic death cannot be wasted, its possibilities cannot be unfulfilled—unless we can believe that we cannot believe in God at all—and the test case of the life and death of Christ gives us confidence that our faith is based on reasonable grounds.

#### ARMAGEDDON AND THE NEW JERUSALEM

Let us turn now to the problem of suffering as it is presented on the larger stage of history. Here it is

important to observe that much of the teaching of our Lord has a more direct bearing on a World-crisis like the present than most of us had noticed in quieter days. The imminence of a stupendous World-crisis is presupposed throughout the New Testament. It is, indeed, probable that the prophecies about the "End of the Age" attributed to our Lord, have been modified by tradition more than any other class of His sayings during the interval which elapsed before they were committed to writing, under the influence of the Apocalyptic ideas which were taken over from later Judaism into the primitive Church.<sup>1</sup> And as it is impossible to be sure of the original form of some of these sayings, so it is also impossible to say how far the language He used was meant to be taken in a strictly literal sense, especially as in all Apocalyptic there was an avowedly symbolic element.<sup>2</sup> It seems, however, certain that He anticipated the complete destruction of the existing world order, involving the disappearance both of the Roman Empire and of the religious system which had its centre in the Temple of Jerusalem—the highest embodiments of the then existing civilisation on its political and religious sides respectively. This was to be followed by a New Era of blessedness in a reconstituted and spiritually renovated world, the initiation of which is associated with His own Return.

In the Day of Pentecost, in the Church's conquest of the Roman Empire and in subsequent epochs of moral and religious regeneration, modern theologians have seen partial fulfilments of the prophecy of our Lord's Second Coming—that Coming being regarded as invisible and spiritual and as taking place, as it were, by instalments.<sup>3</sup> This interpretation is only the logical

<sup>1</sup> This influence appears most conspicuously in the elaborate Apocalypse of St. Mark xiii., and the parallel sections in St. Matthew and St. Luke.

<sup>2</sup> Thus the author of Revelation, in giving the dimensions of the New Jerusalem, makes its height equal to its length and breadth, not because he visualised it thus, but because a cube, being a perfect figure, is an appropriate symbol of the Holy City.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, pp. 90-93.

conclusion of that line of theological development which runs through the whole New Testament and reaches its climax in St. John's Gospel—where the coming of the Paraclete seems almost, if not quite, to take the place held by the visible Second Advent in the Synoptic Gospels. This view I believe to be substantially sound, provided always that it is not maintained that such a conception was clearly and explicitly before the mind of our Lord. To maintain that is, I believe, as untenable as the contrary position of those who argue that He accepted in their most realistic and materialistic sense all the bizarre conceptions of contemporary Apocalyptic.

The minds of the great Hebrew prophets—and it is in them that we get the closest analogies to the mind of our Lord—were neither of a rationalistic nor of a materialistic bent. Their leading characteristic was a power of moral intuition which enabled them to read more readily than contemporaries "the signs of the times." The judgments they passed had reference to the tendencies and institutions of their own time, as seen in the light of their intuitive insight into what they called the Righteousness of the Lord, or into what in modern language one might prefer to call the law of the inevitability of moral consequences.

Since man is a social animal, all anti-social instincts, practices and ideals, all wrong standards of justice or of honour, are of the nature of disease; and disease unchecked means death. Since, again, moral standards and ideals depend in the last resort on man's views about and his valuation of the imponderable and the unseen, false conceptions of God or of man's relation to Him, are no less of the nature of disease. No civilisation, no nation, no institution or community has ever existed which has been entirely free from moral and religious disease, just as there is probably no individual alive who is physically entirely healthy. The vital question, however, is not whether disease is present, but in the struggle within the organism of the forces of

disease and of health, which of the two is gaining on the other. That is why the repentant Publican is in a more hopeful position than the Pharisee ; not because he is a better man—he is not—but because he is growing better, while the other is staying still. For in moral character, both for nations and individuals, to stand still is the same thing as to be slipping backwards. In the physical sphere, the inevitability of the connection of cause and effect, the Reign of Law as we call it, has been one of the latest discoveries of the human mind. In the moral sphere, the Reign of Law, the inevitability of consequences, was already made known to the Hebrew Prophets, but it has not yet been learnt by men at large.

It was by virtue of their grasp of the law of moral inevitability that the Prophets rose above the contemporary conception of a capricious, anthropomorphic tribal Deity to that of God as the moral Governor of the Universe, and in the light of this conception they judged contemporary events. It was because the preservation of Jerusalem was clearly at that time necessary to the conservation of the knowledge of the true God that Isaiah was convinced that the Assyrian would besiege her in vain. It was because the Jewish state and church were detected to be morally bankrupt that Jeremiah knew that the Temple *must* be destroyed. It was for precisely the same reason (compare especially the decisive passage Luke xii. 54-57) that it was clear to our Lord's mind that judgment had already gone forth on the Roman Empire and the Jewish Church.

“Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” Great Empires are founded on “blood and iron,” but only by nations which internally are morally sounder than their rivals ; and they endure but a short while unless, in the main, justice secures what the sword has won. Where too great success has undermined the moral

fibre of the ruling nation, or its rule has too little regard to justice and conciliation, a process of decay sets in, which, unnoticed for a time, ends in inevitable collapse. Not otherwise a religious community extends in power and influence by reason of the clearness of its grasp on certain great essentials of moral and religious truth and by the measure of its success in realising in conduct the highest ideals for which it stands. Let it cease to progress, let it surrender to formalism, insincerity, or the pride of temporal influence, and its doom is sealed. No Empire had succeeded like that of Rome ; none had, on the whole, so well deserved success. No religious community had, either in doctrine or in practice, reached the level of the Jewish Church. To the superficial observer it was well with both, but to the prophetic eye both were seen to be stagnant, strangled by their own great past, morally bankrupt, and therefore doomed.

The man of genius or insight necessarily speaks to the men of his own generation and about things which concern that generation, but in exact proportion to the greatness of his insight, what he expresses in relation to the conditions or the problems of his own time, is valid *mutatis mutandis* for all time. The rule holds good with all great art, literature and philosophy, as well as with the great preachers of righteousness. We should, then, expect it to be pre-eminently true of our Lord. The "signs of the times" which He bade men observe consisted essentially in moral stagnation disguised under an outward semblance of high civilisation or religious activity. These being undoubtedly present He saw the certainty of approaching catastrophe.

But His vision went beyond that great catastrophe to a great hope, to the certainty of a new life and a new inspiration divinely given which should build up out of the ruins of the old a Kingdom of God in which men's sense of moral values, as well as their power of living up to them, would be profoundly changed, and

the will of God would be done on earth even as in Heaven. The moral and political situation of the contemporary Roman State and Jewish Church, He judged in the light of His intuitive grasp of the character and purposes of God, which express themselves in what I have ventured to translate into modern jargon as the two laws—the Law of the inevitability of moral consequences, and the Law of the Augmentation of Value. Hence the prophecies of destruction and restoration which He spoke in regard to the situation of His own time sum up, as it were in one conspicuous instance, a law that runs through all history, that law which is typified in the legend of the Phoenix rising with youth renewed from the ashes of a dead past.

History is crowded with instances of this law—both on the grand scale and on the small. One or two of the most obvious will occur to every one. We think at once of the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem and of the catastrophic destruction of the Temple and what it stood for. Yet this calamity only lent more freedom and fresh vigour to the Christian Church. We recall the crash of the Roman Empire, which, however, led ultimately to the reinvigoration of European civilisation. So, again, the system of the Catholic Church and the mediaeval civilisation which it created, when in its turn it had become morally bankrupt, fell after half a century of bloodshed at the Reformation. It fell, but only to be replaced by a richer civilisation, and by a sounder religion, within as well as without the Latin allegiance. Once more the new intellectual and ethical spirit, and the new political system which was evolved, became corrupt. Beginning in France, the eldest daughter of the Renaissance, the Age of Reason and Enlightenment went down in blood ; but the seeds were sown of a real advance in the moral and political outlook of Europe.

And for us to-day—is there not comfort and illumination in our Lord's vision of the great tribulation



as a necessary precursor of the better things to come? In this country, at any rate, we "were eating and drinking and knew not until the flood came," but looking back we can all see that, the moral and political ideals of the nations of Europe being what they were, the catastrophe was inevitable. It is to the moral stagnation of Europe that this war is due. I do not mean to say that there has been no ethical advance in the last hundred years—the contrary is true. But in those same hundred years the advance in knowledge, in invention, in organisation, in the control of nature, has been beyond all precedent; and, compared with that advance, the ethical movement has been *relatively* stagnant. And, in Germany, the country where the advance in these other things has been greatest, the ethical advance has been least. Had the ethical advance been anything like as great as the scientific and material, some alternative to war would long ago have been found. And it is precisely *because of* the scientific and material progress that modern war is so infinitely more ruinous than war of old. The unprecedented horrors of the present time are solely due to the combination of immense material with trifling moral progress. It is as true, therefore, of our present as of older civilisations that its fall—for it is falling, and the conclusion of peace will not be the end of its collapse—is due to inner moral bankruptcy.

So much of what is perishing in this war, so much of what is likely to perish afterwards from financial starvation and economic revolution was so good, so promising. Religious revival, humanitarian enterprise, political reform, international good understanding seemed all in such a hopeful way. Humanly speaking, it is impossible to see how those values are to be conserved. Not from what we can see, only from what we can believe, can we draw hope.

But let us reflect. In A.D. 70 the Holy City—the headquarters of the highest religion the world had known—was made desolate, and the offering of the

central act of worship of that religion was for ever ended. What pious Jew could have known or hoped that, even as he wept, a religion, the consummation of all he prized and hoped for, was at the beginning of a triumphant march over all the then known world? When St. Augustine, after the sack of Rome, wrote his *City of God*, to console men for the perishing of all the earthly things they loved, did he suspect that a civilisation far transcending it in moral, material and intellectual achievement would one day arise out of the ruins? How many pious nuns in the Reformation Era saw in that epoch of rebellion, in that unprecedented havoc of sacred things, the beginning of a new religious life for Europe? When the French monarchy and aristocracy, so long the standard-bearers of European culture, perished in the Terror, who could see that the civilisation of mankind was not permanently impoverished?

Why, then, should *we* expect to *see*? But we can *hope*; nay, unless we are guilty of unreason, we must do more than hope, we can *believe*.

We have good reason to be confident that God intends to build up a better Europe, a New Jerusalem on the ruins of the old. But—let us not deceive ourselves—we have no reason to suppose that the outward and visible signs of this process will be conspicuously visible at once, perhaps not even within our generation. ἀρχὴ ὁδῶν ταῦτα. The birth-pangs of a New Era may yet last long. “But he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved.”

### THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

So far we have found empirical reason for the belief that the Conservation of Value and even the Augmentation of Value is a law of life, that loss is replaced by unexpected gain, destruction by reconstruction on sounder lines. Must we, however, be content to leave it there, and merely to say that as a matter of

fact gain *does* follow loss, or can we see at all why this should be the case? Can the gain that follows be shown to be in any way related as a *consequence* to the loss that precedes? In other words, can we detect a meaning and a purpose in the sufferings of the world?

We are now approaching to the heart of the mystery of life, and I would reiterate my belief that no final solution to the problem has yet been found. But I am convinced that the mystery is one which has been made to appear far darker than it really is by the fatal confusion which prevails in many minds between the functions of God and Satan.

War, sickness and other calamities are often spoken of as the act of God; as "judgments" or "visitations" sent by Him on men as a punishment for their sins. These things often are the direct consequences of sin, but a *consequence* can only be called a *judgment* or *punishment* in proportion as it falls on the really guilty party and has some equitable relation to the nature of the offence. But these so-called judgments fall with equal severity on innocent and guilty alike. Prussian officers in Belgium have massacred half a village as a punishment for the offence of a single *franc-tireur*. They have at least the excuse that they had no means of knowing who was the actual offender. No such extenuation can be put forward in the case of a Being presumed to be omniscient, on the assumption that punishment is the explanation of the act. Again, it is obvious that at least half the ills that flesh is heir to are the direct result of ignorance, folly or sin—if not on the part of those who principally suffer, yet on the part of some one else. But it would seem that ignorance, folly and sin and all their inevitable consequences are ascribed by our Lord to Satan, not to God.<sup>1</sup> And it makes no difference to this ascription whether we regard Satan as a personal Angel of Darkness or as a

<sup>1</sup> The attribution of all evil to a Power hostile to God is one of the points in which the New Testament is most in advance of the Old. Cf. Amos iii. 6, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

convenient name for the sum-total influence of all the evil inclinations and errors, the bad customs and false ideals which have originated in the mind of man.

No doubt God is responsible for the creation of a world which is so ordered that it really matters to others besides himself what each man is or does, in which causes inevitably produce their natural effects, and in which far-reaching consequences are necessarily attached to all our acts—consequences which are beneficent if an act is good, evil if an act is bad. Since God is ultimately responsible for a world in which these laws hold good, we may assume that ultimately the good will overcome the evil. Perhaps (though this is more debatable) we may even assume that, but for the conflict involved in overcoming evil, the ultimate good itself would somehow have been far less good. But that is quite a different thing from saying that things which are obviously bad, or which are clearly the results of remediable ignorance or sin, are a clear expression of the Divine Justice and a direct manifestation of the working of the Divine Providence. On the contrary, such things are a manifestation of that principle in the Universe (whether human or diabolic in origin) which is in open rebellion against the Divine Will. God is able to bring good out of evil, but to see the hand of God in the evil itself is an error which is only the more dangerous because it has been shared by many of the great religious leaders of the past. If men are taught to see the hand of God when they ought to see the power of Satan, they inevitably form a false conception of the nature and character of God—and to worship God under a false conception, is the same thing as to worship a false God; and in exact proportion to the element of falseness in the conception, it is idolatry. If sickness and calamity are viewed as a characteristic expression of the will of God, attempts to prevent or alleviate them cannot but seem to be tainted with futility if not impiety; the punishment of criminals

or children will necessarily assume a harsher form ; and an element of terror and gloom, deprecation and dull servile submission must inevitably colour the whole attitude of the individual, both in his approach to God in prayer and in his general outlook on life. Indeed, the question may well be raised whether the fact that so much of this unconscious idolatry has been mixed with truer and worthier conceptions of God in the popular religion of Christendom may not be largely responsible for the present ineffectiveness of Christianity in the world.

The notion that suffering is a judgment sent by God, and that the sufferings of each individual are equitably proportioned to his own sins has a certain amount of support in the Old Testament, although the Book of Job was expressly written to refute it. But it is definitely repudiated by our Lord. "Neither did this man sin nor his parents, that he was born blind." "He maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good." "Those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?"

This does not, of course, alter the fact already remarked on that most human suffering is the actual result of somebody's sin. But for the culpable negligence of somebody the tower in Siloam would doubtless have been in a better state of repair ; although it is clear that the person actually responsible was not one of the eighteen on whom it fell. The case is typical. Most human suffering is due to human negligence and sin, or to an ignorance which, but for carelessness and sin, would long ago have been done away. Of the suffering which each one of us has to endure, much is the result, direct or indirect, of our own ignorance, neglect or sin, but quite as much is due to some one else's ; while our own sins are as often mainly suffered for by some one else. But it is precisely the fact that no kind of equitable proportion is traceable in this world between men's sufferings and their deserts which pre-

cludes us from regarding them as a direct Divine *punishment* or judgment.

But, if suffering is not a form of punishment or judgment, what is its purpose?

The New Testament does not stop short at the purely negative observation that the suffering of the individual is not proportionate to his sins: it has an answer to give to this question. It affirms that suffering has, or rather may under certain conditions have, a distinct and positive value both for the sufferer and for others. It starts with the case which presents the moral and religious problem we are considering in its acutest and most difficult form, *i.e.* the case of Christ Himself—the ideally good man brought by the sins of others to an ideally bad end. It asserts that the result of this was positive good, for that through suffering He was Himself “made perfect”; and by that same suffering “he saved his people from their sins,” or at least all of them who were ready to adopt a certain attitude of mind and will.

Moreover, in the New Testament view, the case of Christ, though a unique case, is not an isolated one. The same law is alleged to hold good of all men, that for those who accept it in the right spirit suffering becomes both a means of moral development for the sufferer and a means of redemption to others. So that the followers of Christ may even be said to make up as it were the unpaid balance (*ὀστερήματα*)<sup>1</sup> of the redemptive sufferings of their Master.

Suffering then is, or at least can be, corrective, educative and redemptive. Such without possibility of cavil is the New Testament view. The question is, Is that view one which is supported, or is it one which is confuted, by the facts of life? Is it a view which will stand the test of experience?

But here again a protest must be made against a widespread popular misconception as to what the New

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 24.

Testament really does teach. People often speak as if suffering had necessarily and automatically a purifying and ennobling effect independently of how one meets it : as if suffering were therefore a thing *per se* desirable ; or as if joy were not an equally educative and equally necessary experience to the saint.

But these contentions are neither true nor do they fairly represent the New Testament. A saint is known, not by his austerities or his gloom but by his exhibition of a spirit whose most conspicuous manifestations are love, joy and peace. Suffering is not a thing to be asked for but to be accepted when it comes, otherwise why did Christ Himself pray that if possible the cup might pass from Him ? It is merely affirmed that *in a sinful world* suffering is a thing without which the highest results cannot be attained. Again, it is nowhere suggested that suffering always and necessarily elevates and redeems ; it depends entirely on the use that is made of it. "All things," it is affirmed, "work together for good," but only "to them that love God." Indeed, in this one text is summed up the New Testament view.

If, then, we are to verify the truth of the Apostle's contention by an appeal to the facts of life, we must first make at least a provisional definition of what we mean by those who "love God." We cannot "love God" perfectly unless we have right knowledge about Him, for we are told to love Him with all our mind as well as with other faculties. Theological truth is therefore an important thing. Nevertheless the love of God is much more a matter of the heart and the will than of the intellect, and it is a thing which is only partially attained to in this world even by the greatest Christian saints. Surely, then, at any rate provisionally and for the purpose of this investigation, we must include under the heading of "them that love God" all whom we can broadly call "men of goodwill," even though the theological beliefs or disbeliefs which they profess may seem to us to fall a long way short of the truth.

"All things work together for good to them that love God." Let us treat this dictum as an hypothesis which we are to test by applying it to the facts of experience. It is obvious at first sight, that there is at any rate something to be said for it. It does cover at least some of the facts. All of us know cases of men or women to whom suffering has proved eminently educative. "It has been the making of him" we often say. And all of us know persons whom suffering so far from elevating seems to have either crushed or permanently embittered. And this remarkable difference of result seems to depend not on the nature of the suffering but on the character of the person who suffers. For exactly the same type of misfortune which brings out the latent worth of one person seems to make for the ruin of another. The same be it noted is true of prosperity also. It seems to bring out the best in one man and the worst in another. The moral result of either depends on the way in which the individual reacts towards them, "He that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." Sunshine and rain are both necessary to growth—but they bring up the tares as well as the wheat. Prosperity and adversity are the two great educators of mankind, but they are also the great discriminators. They make men, and they find men out.

It is clear then that the New Testament view is, at any rate to some extent, verifiable in relation to the facts of life. It is worth while, therefore, to pursue the investigation a little further. The medicinal value of suffering strikes the eye most and most frequently in the case of persons in whom prosperity has developed either something of that aggressive egotism which the Greek called *ὑβρις*, or a more genial but essentially luxurious and futile softness—that is to say in cases where there is a grave and obvious moral weakness to be cured. But what is the value of suffering to characters of a nobler type? The New Testament is



bold to say even of the Master Himself that He was "made perfect through suffering." And this is affirmed by a writer who is emphatic in maintaining that He was without sin. It is suggested, then, that even in the highest type of character, the soul lacks its full development so long as certain of its moral potentialities are latent, so long as they remain mere potentialities.

Experience seems to bear out this judgment. The ideal of character is no placid state of possibilities unfulfilled, some elements at least in it can only be realised through conflict—and though conflict often has in it an element of joy, conflict about vital issues always involves pain. The soldier's heroism is heroism in proportion to the value of life to him who faces death, and to the clearness with which he realises the risk. Generosity is generosity only when the gift costs the giver much. Patience is only a virtue according to the greatness of the trouble borne and the measure of cheerfulness with which it is endured. And in all these cases being willing to face is not the same thing as having faced and having overcome. When we say of such and such an experience, "It has made a man of him," we speak truth, for it is only in and through action that character realises itself. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous," and it is a fact of experience that the men and women whom we most revere, to whom in trouble and in difficulty we turn for help and guidance, are always among those who have known suffering, physical or mental. But among those also whom we have least reason to revere there are also many who have suffered much; for it is not suffering *per se*, but suffering accepted, triumphed over and transcended that educates and ennobles.

In the schoolroom of the soul—a schoolroom in which it should never be forgotten that Joy as well as Sorrow is among the teachers—progress is made not by suffering *per se*, but only by suffering accepted with a certain

attitude of mind, suffering met by a certain orientation of the will. But if this is so, we must ask whence, then, comes that attitude of mind; that bent of the will, which alone makes it possible to learn the lessons of that school? The answer to this question will, we shall find, throw further light on the purpose of the sufferings of the nobler souls.

Certain bents of mind, certain embryo attitudes towards life, appear so early in the life history of the individual that rightly or wrongly we commonly regard them as innate, but these innate tendencies can to an indefinite extent be modified by the influence of other personalities. For better and for worse character is infectious; and this is especially true of just those elements in character wherein lies the capacity to profit by suffering. Heroism, generosity, cheerfulness under adversity, have an attraction for the human heart which only those can resist who are far gone in selfishness and meanness. Those who will dare all, give all, bear all, have the power to transform and recreate the whole life and character of other men.

To give all, to bear all and to dare all, what is this but to re-incarnate the Spirit of Christ? Doubtless there is an admixture of selfishness, of narrowness, of blindness, even in the best acts of most men. The objects for which they dare, the egoism mingled with their acts of love, the spirit in which they bear slights and misfortunes, fall short of the ideal as seen in Christ. Yet just in proportion as men dare, love or endure in His spirit, they are found by their triumph over dangers, obstacles and pains not only themselves to have risen to nobler heights of character, but to have become (though often without knowing it) strong to convert, inspire and redeem their fellows.

Suffering then which is merited is often a sharp reminder that saves and checks men on a downward path; suffering that is unmerited is an opportunity, and a twofold one—an opportunity to become like Christ,

and an opportunity to share His work. But it is an opportunity which it is open to us to utilise or to let alone. . . . This is where Prayer helps most of all.

This world is a world of lost opportunity and waste. Time, talent, money, life are constantly being squandered, but the worst waste of all is the waste of suffering. For suffering, when it does not elevate, degrades. Profitless suffering is what is meant by Hell; and Hell is the failure of God.

Suffering, we have seen, is corrective, educative and redemptive, in the first place to those who "love God" from the beginning, in the second place to those who as a result of the sufferings of these—or, to speak more strictly, as a result of the way in which these face and overcome their sufferings—are led to become recruits to the great army of those who "love God." What about the others?

Some of our sins, negligences and ignorances involve consequences which recoil on our own heads directly and immediately, others only do so indirectly or after a long interval. It is probable, though neither we nor others can always trace it, that in the long run every evil thought, word or deed of ours "comes home to roost"; although, as already insisted, we are never (though we sometimes think so) the only sufferers, and rarely the principal or most immediate sufferers from them; while the sufferings which we have to bear are as often the direct consequence of the sins and follies of others as of ourselves.

Now, it is especially in the instinctive attitude taken up toward these painful consequences that characters differentiate themselves.

Where a painful consequence is the direct and obvious result of a sin committed by himself, one man will just lament his bad luck, another will violently resent the pain, but "the man of goodwill" will say to himself, "Well, I deserved it." And in so far as he recognises it as a just punishment of his sin, the pain has morally a corrective effect upon him. In a similar

spirit one who realises and keenly and bitterly repents a sin, will sometimes cry out, "What can I do to make amends?" "Let me be punished." Pain met in this spirit is purgatorial, it cleanses and strengthens.

When, however, the painful consequences seem the direct result of some one else's sin or folly, or of some quite trifling error of his own, a situation far more testing to character occurs. Even good men, when not in their best moments, will often say, "I did not deserve this." Bitterness and resentment for a time possess the soul. After a while the reflection may occur, "Well, perhaps though I did not deserve it this time and for this offence, other things I have done have gone unpunished. Strike a balance and God is not in my debt." Then, too, the pain becomes purgatorial.

But the best men in their best moments do not, when trouble comes, raise the question of merit and desert at all. They just accept the suffering as something to be faced, something to be overcome. That way lies the greatest possibility of achievement. "Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well: and the pools are filled with water."

People often speak of pain as if all pain were of the same kind, or as if the difference between pains depended solely on the differences in their cause. Thus the pain of a prick is not that of an ache, and both differ from that of a disappointment. Such differences are real, but a far more important difference in the quality of pains is one that cuts across all these distinctions. It follows from the fact that man is not a mere animal, that ultimately the nature and quality of every pain is determined by the mental and moral attitude of the sufferer. In the case of mental pain this is obvious.

"We look before and after  
And pine for what is not."

Anxiety, disillusionment, mourning and resentment do not exist at all for a rabbit or a sheep. They are purely

psychic in origin, and the way in which they are actually *felt* depends entirely on the character and habit of mind of the sufferer. This is no less true in the case of pains of purely physical origin. A plucky and cheerful patient does not *feel* pain in the same way as one who is resentful and depressed, even though both are suffering from exactly the same injury or the same disease. Pain does not merely have a different moral effect on different characters, it is actually experienced as a different quality of feeling. It is possible that there is pain in Heaven, but if so it is not the same *feeling* as the pain of Hell.

St. John writes that both Judgment and Eternal Life have their beginning, though not their end, in this life. Heaven, Hell and Purgatory are all to be found in this world, and most of us spend some time in each. When trouble comes and we ask passionately, "What have I done to deserve this?" that bitterness and resentment is a glimpse of Hell, for what is Hell but permanent suffering permanently resented? There is a popular notion that those in Hell are aware of their wickedness and recognise the justice of their sentence. But can it be so? It is a law of the moral life that he who sins against the light ceases to see the light. Defy conscience and it becomes less sensitive. The worse a man gets the less he is aware of it, the less therefore is he capable of regarding as just any pain or penalties which come upon him. The habitual drunkard or debauchee, so long as he still despises himself, may indeed be on the road to Hell, but he is not yet there. The absolute egoist is there already; for being quite unaware of his own nature, every pain that comes to him is violently resented as undeserved. To him pain is not medicine but damnation.

In the second place, there is the man who meets pain with courage, admitting frankly, in one case, that it is an obvious consequence of his own folly or sin, in another case, that, although not due to his own fault,

it is yet not out of proportion to his total deserts. He is in Purgatory. To him pain is remedial.<sup>1</sup>

There remains the man who, inspired by a great purpose or ideal, accepts the changes and chances of life, in small things, like the old Viking "with a frolic welcome," like obstacles in a steeplechase, or bruises in the football field ; in larger things, with cheerfulness and courage, as wounds received in battle ; and in great sorrows, with the acceptance wherein is peace. He is at the gate of Heaven. He has tasted the life of God. For if Christ is, as St. Paul puts it, "the portrait of the invisible God," His Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Return to save and bless, are a picture to us, under conditions of time and space and in terms understandable to human intelligence, of something which is Eternal in the Life of God. And that something includes sorrow felt to the uttermost, joy absolutely triumphant, love itself perfected so as to become an eternal benediction on those it loves. And the sorrow is not merely followed and compensated for by the joy, "sorrow is turned into joy." But for the sorrow the joy would be other and less than it is : and just because it has experienced both desolation and triumph the love is, both for itself and others, a stronger and richer thing.

Heaven, Hell and Purgatory are all to be found in this life, and in this life we constantly see men passing through Purgatory at any rate to the gates of Heaven. What about Hell? No one of us but has been for a while in Hell, no one of us but has experienced the keenest of all pains, acute suffering bitterly resented. Yet often in the course of time the element of resentment fades away, and we can look back in calm on the great sorrow or the grievous humiliation. But this only happens to those who have declined to

<sup>1</sup> I am using Purgatory in its older sense, as in Dante. Suarez and most, I believe, if not all, Jesuit Theologians hold that the pains of Purgatory are purely penal and merely the retributory equivalent of sins committed, the moral character of those who are to be saved having been miraculously made fit for Heaven at the moment of death. This doctrine seems a gratuitous jettison of the most valuable element in the Mediaeval mythology of the other world.

let this bitterness and resentment become the dominant factor in their mental life, that is to those who, however slowly, however feebly, and however unconsciously, have to some extent met the trouble in the right spirit. In that case what began as Hell has become Purgatory. Such men looking back, it may be after a long stretch of time, can usually realise that a tendency to ὑβρις, to self-indulgence, to dilettantism or some other form of waste of self or contempt of others was, as a matter of fact, checked by this great pain ; and that the pain has become after all in the long run purgatorial. "It is good for me that I have been in trouble : that I may learn thy statutes." Such men commonly see also, that had they met that pain in a better spirit than they did, it might have taught them more quickly and less painfully than was actually the case. That is to say, the time which they actually spent in Hell was so far dead loss, and its pain was mere damnation ; yet just in so far as they forgot their bitterness and resentment it became purgatorial and ultimately redemptive.

Some men who seem to be in Hell struggle out into Purgatory in this life ; others, so far as we can judge, do not. They go down to the grave wholly self-centred, morally callous, unrepentant. To such immortality can only mean Hell, a worse Hell and a developing one — unless some radical and permanent change of attitude can even then be brought about. We have seen how in this world men seem to pass from Hell to Purgatory, from Purgatory almost to Heaven. These things are beyond our ken, but we know that God wills not the death of a sinner, and for myself I hesitate to accept the belief that the Love of God will suffer final defeat at the hands of any individual. Yet the longer the blindness and the defiance of the individual lasts, the worse his Hell must become ; and the longer (if we are to speak in terms of time of what possibly may take place in some extra-temporal phase of existence) must be the period of purgatorial new

growth required. And though there is a sense in which to the repentant the pains of a Hell which is now past may be changed in retrospect into purgatorial pains, I cannot but feel that in the postponement of repentance, and the long endurance of profitless pain, there has been incurred a real and eternal loss both to the sinner and to God.

### THE SUFFERING OF GOD

Man makes God not in his own image but in the image of his King. Hence the gods of heathendom, like its despots, are arbitrary and cruel. "The Kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, their great men overbear them . . . but the Son of Man (that is, the mighty Christ, the King of Kings) came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Had the Christian, like the heathen, conceived God in the image of his King, the problem of suffering would have taken on a different shape for most men's minds. Yet surely this is what the New Testament bids us do. "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us. . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Christ, says St. Paul, is the visible "portrait of the invisible God"<sup>1</sup>—God in man made manifest.

So we have always been taught, but until quite recently theologians have never ventured to face the full implications of what is meant by the Divinity of Christ. The greatest struggle in all Church history was the battle of Athanasius against the Arian attempt to deny the essential divinity of the Son. And, on paper, Athanasius won. The actual wording of the Nicene Creed was a victory for the cause he championed. But the predominant influence, partly of Old Testament conceptions of God, partly of that doctrine of the impassibility of God which had become a commonplace of Greek Philosophy, robbed his victory of half its fruits.

<sup>1</sup> *εικὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου* (Col. i. 15).



From Greek Philosophy the Church inherited a conception of God as an Absolute remote from the world, of whom nothing but negatives can be predicated, and especially as a Being inaccessible to change and suffering. This was the very foundation and starting-point of the Arian position, but it profoundly influenced his opponents also. From the Old Testament was derived the conception of a God of Righteousness and of Judgment, a God alive and active, a God alike of mercy and of wrath, very different from the cold, bare abstraction of Greek Philosophy. Yet another view of God as pre-eminently the loving Father came from the New Testament.

Something of each of these three conceptions has been combined in the traditional conception of God the Father. The proportions in which they were blended have naturally varied with the outlook and temperament of different individuals. But in one point there has been general agreement. The Hebrew imagination pictured God as dwelling in regal splendour in a far-off luminous Heaven remote from suffering and pain; and though even in the Old Testament another note is struck at times—"in all their affliction he was afflicted"<sup>1</sup>—it is only very rarely. Still less could Greek thought tolerate the idea that the Absolute could suffer. Thus the doctrine of the impassibility of God became a postulate of theology.

But capacity to feel, and if need be to suffer, is surely involved in the very conception of God as love. Men still spoke of the love of God: they only really meant it when they thought of God the Son; clemency at most—a royal prerogative—was imagined of the Father. God the Father is conceived as Majesty, God the Son as Love.

The Christian Creed acknowledges but one God and one quality of Godhead—so far Athanasius won his cause; but the Christian *imagination* has been driven

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 9.

by this postulate of the impassibility of God to worship two. Side by side sit throned in Heaven God the Father, omnipotent, unchangeable, impassible, and on His right hand God the Son, "passus, crucifixus, mortuus, resurrectus." What is this but Arianism, routed in the field of intellectual definition, triumphing in the more important sphere of the imaginative presentation of the object of the belief?

What Christianity most needs to-day is a resolute reassertion in terms of modern thought of the principle championed by St. John and Athanasius. Of the principle, I say, but not of the language. *λόγος* to us is a dumb word; "of one substance with the Father" suggests to modern minds a static and purely intellectualistic conception contrary to the real spirit of the view which Athanasius fought for. Everything that lives must develop, and development means such modification of the organism as shall adapt it to its ever-changing environment. If the adaptation is good, the vital principle will gain an added life; if clumsy, it will just maintain its life until it can put forth a better; but if it can put forth no new modification to meet the changing environment, it dies. Christian theology is no exception to this universal principle and inasmuch as belief cannot exist without some attempt to justify and express itself in intellectual categories, the Christian Church must and will find new ways of expressing to itself and to others the meaning of its faith.

We may have reason to believe that God is no more directly responsible for suffering than for the preventable ignorance or sin of which it is so often the consequence; that to those who love God the very fact of suffering gives an opportunity of rising to heights to which perhaps without it they could not have risen; and that God Himself assists and inspires them to use this opportunity aright. Nevertheless, so long as God is pictured to the imagination as living in regal

splendour in a gorgeous heaven untouched by suffering and ill, such considerations give only half an answer to the question, If God is, and God is good, why did He create a world of sin and pain? If God is a mere spectator of it all, God must be something less than perfect Love. Boldly press home the principles of St. Paul, St. John, and Athanasius—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," the Father is essentially one with the Son, the life and character of Christ is a real mirror of the life and character of God—and all is changed. God Himself is seen to share the suffering He allows. More than that: by an eternal activity, of which the Death of Christ is both a symbol and also an essential part, He is everlastingly, at the cost of His own effort and His own pain, redeeming and perfecting the world He made.

The importance of reasserting this fundamental principle of Christianity at the present day cannot be over-estimated. It must, however, be clearly recognised that the question is one which raises some difficult philosophical problems. Moreover, the lessons of history will be thrown away unless we realise that a protest against an error, or against a one-sided emphasis, in contemporary religious thought may easily lead to error in the opposite direction. Nothing is to be gained by reviving in a modern form the ancient heresy known as Patripassianism, that is, the doctrine that the Christ who hung on the Cross is indistinguishable from the Father in Heaven.

The doctrine of the Trinity was the result of an attempt on the part of the early Church to think out some of these difficulties in terms of contemporary philosophy. The dogmatic system of which it is the crown and centre has been associated in the past with a long and steady effort to stifle the intellectual development of the race. It is not strange then that many thinking men should have come to look upon the

doctrine in question as the graveyard of European thought, full only of dry bones unworthy of the attention of serious philosophy. Yet, whatever may be thought of the doctrine of the Trinity as a piece of strict metaphysic, it at least embodies in symbolic form certain elements which are fundamental to any tenable philosophical conception of the Divine nature.

There are two methods by which Philosophy has attempted to arrive at a conception of God.

The negative method starts from the undeniable fact that the qualities which we perceive in finite things are either wholly inapplicable or are not applicable *in the same sense* to an Infinite Being. This is obviously true of physical qualities like shape or colour, it is also true of others. Personality, for instance, suggests at once personal idiosyncrasy and limitation which cannot be conceived to exist in God. Again there is no meaning in saying that God is honest—for honesty is a virtue relative to the institution of private property on earth. The negative method therefore infers that all that can be said or known of God is that He is *not* like anything we know and therefore totally inconceivable. This conclusion is the stultification both of philosophy and of religion.

The positive method, on the other hand, admits, indeed, that qualities like personality or justice, as we see them in operation in the inter-relations of limited human beings in any particular phase of social development, do not exactly represent the nature of such qualities in God. But it takes personality, as being the highest thing we know, and its activities in Love, Justice, etc. at their highest, and says, "This is the highest that we can conceive, it is therefore the least inadequate form under which to conceive God. God is more than this, but He is at least this; and therefore to say that He is Personal and Good is far more true than to say we know nothing about Him on the ground that Personality and Goodness cannot mean exactly the

same thing in the case of God and in the case of man." This method leads somewhere.

Christianity goes one step further and affirms that Personality and Love as we can see them in the Ideal Man are not merely the best symbol we can find of the Divine, but are veritably of the Divine essence. But, if so, orthodox theology was surely right in affirming that, though what we see in Christ is really divine, it is not the Godhead in its totality.

God then must be conceived as Personal in the fullest sense. But unless we are to conceive the life of God as being a poorer and meaner thing than the life of man, we are bound to think of it as containing certain activities which to us are only possible through life in a society—the love of equals, of parents, of children. And if worship is the highest thing we know on earth, it also must be a faint shadow of something eternal in the life of God. Hence the Unity and the Personality of God must be conceived as, in some way to us inscrutable, having within Itself the possibilities of a life which we can only think of as exercised in a society. And if we are seeking how to present such a conception in a way which will make it effective as a devotional symbol, we shall find some difficulty in improving on the old Trinitarian formula, One God in Three Persons. It is only if we insist on pressing strictly all its arithmetical and metaphysical implications that we get into difficulties.

This brings us back to our original investigation. We have seen that any philosophically tenable conception of the nature and personality of God must combine within itself attributes and activities which cannot exist, or at least cannot operate simultaneously, in a limited human personality. Up to a point emotions of sorrow and joy can co-exist in the human mind, but only up to a point. The highest joy and the deepest sorrow can be experienced by the human soul only in succession, not simultaneously. But if, as most philosophers have held, the life of God is outside the time sequence, we

have no right to suppose that this limitation applies to God.

Moreover, the higher the stage of moral and intellectual development attained by any individual the greater is his sensitiveness not only to the sufferings of others and to the true character of sin, but also to the blessedness of happiness, to the glory of moral triumph. We may infer that both the pain and the joy of God are proportionately more intense. For God can see clearly the consolation beyond the suffering, the splendid moral growth achieved thereby, and the redemption beyond the sin.

There is, therefore, an important element of truth in the reluctance of the classical Theology to admit the direct passibility of the Father. To put it in another way. If Christ is truly to us the portrait of the unseen God, the Crucifixion is not merely an event which happened once during three hours of time, it stands for something which is eternal in the life of God—but so also does the Resurrection. Therefore everlastingly in the life of God "Death is swallowed up in Victory." And the last word of the Christian Faith is not sorrow, but sorrow overcome, in love and in joy and in the peace of God which passeth all understanding.



II

PRAYER AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

BY

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## II

### PRAYER AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

I. To the first age of the Church the Old Testament was the complete Bible ; and in all periods it has been regarded by the majority of Christians as of equal authority with the New. Its influence on the course of Christian thought has been immense. But nowhere has that influence been more marked than in the region of prayer. The New Testament contains but few prayers to serve as models for later times. But prayers are found everywhere in the Old Testament ; and, more particularly, the Psalms have not only been from the beginning the real hymn-book of the Christian Church, but have done much to determine both the language and the mental attitude of all Christian devotion. Hence a study of prayer must take account of the Old Testament and the devotional life of the Hebrews.

The Hebrew nature was in itself a strange mixture of opposites. As Professor George Adam Smith has described it, it was "coarse and tender, enduring and passionate, meditative and unspeculative." These opposites are reflected throughout its devotional literature. The stern Puritanism of the moralist, the patriot's eager loyalty to the traditional law, the tenderest and most childlike piety side by side with fierce hatred of the alien, meet us in every section of the Psalter. If we turn to the Prophets, we see the glowing anticipations of

the second Isaiah set over against the bitter recriminations of Obadiah or Nahum ; and in the Book of Jonah the intolerant narrowness of Judaism finds its clearest utterance and its most definite condemnation. Invective and sarcasm came to the Hebrews as easily as the language of religious rapture. But they did not reserve their invective for their enemies. Their hoarse Semitic dialect (no less hoarse because it could be so wonderfully gentle) delighted to lash the iniquities and exult over the fate of Edom or Assyria ;<sup>1</sup> but it exhausted its resources in describing the woes which were to follow Israel's disobedience and the brutalities of her idolatrous and shameless past.<sup>2</sup>

The same contrast strikes us when we turn to the Old Testament presentation of Jahveh Himself. How august He is, and how patient ; how ready to be "entreated" and to repent Him of the evil ; how slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. Yet He is a "man of war" ; He thunders from the sky to bring victory to His hard-pressed people ; He bids His servants exterminate their neighbours without sparing man or beast ; He sends forth His angels to sweep the foe to destruction.<sup>3</sup> He is equally remorseless to Israel. He pities those who fear Him as a father pities his children ; yet He will doom the whole nation to the horrors of exile. "You only have I known of all the nations upon earth ; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities."<sup>4</sup>

II. It is no wonder that many readers are simply repelled by the Old Testament. Marcion, they would agree, was right. The God of the Old Testament cannot be the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, but only His rival and foe. And those who shrink from so extreme and heretical a statement, and who prefer to distinguish between the eternal will of God and the

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lxiii. 1 ff. ; xxxvii. 22 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. viii. ; Ezek. xxiii. etc.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xviii. 39 ff. ; Deut. xx. 16 ; 2 Kings xix. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Amos iii. 2.

varying and partial grasp of that will by man, must often be aware of the same repugnance.

Nor is the difficulty to be met for any of us by the appeal to inspiration. There is no satisfactory or accepted definition of inspiration to which appeal can be made. The Old Testament must be judged by the standards applied to other books. No more than any other book in these days can it claim the privilege of tradition or ecclesiastical authority. It must defend itself, or its case must go by default.

This feeling of alienation from the Old Testament is by no means universal. Indeed, its very existence would surprise many Christian people. The qualities which often raise difficulties to-day have been part of the life of the Church in the past. For this the Old Testament must itself be held, at least in part, responsible. Intolerance, pride and self-seeking, the desire for revenge,<sup>1</sup> the commercialism which would approach God by gifts or propitiate Him by self-inflicted pains and tortures—all these can point to familiar Old Testament language for their authority. Nor have they been eradicated from the religious attitude of to-day. Much of the devotion even of our twentieth-century Christianity, it must be confessed, is far nearer to the Old Testament than to the New.

By those who feel this contrast two pleas are often urged in mitigation of judgment. First, the Old Testament, we are reminded, contains the literature of a nation, produced throughout a period of at least a millennium. The cruder and harsher elements surely grow up in the elementary stages; later on, these are replaced by the morality and piety which are fulfilled in New Testament days. But this is only true in part. Both sets of characteristics are found throughout the nation's development. The earliest sections of the Pentateuch

<sup>1</sup> The most startling examples are to be found in Pss. cix., cxxxvii. But we must remember that the Jews had been familiarised with the treatment accorded in later years to Belgium and Armenia. The casting of Pharisaic stones must be indulged in with caution.

contain expressions worthy of Paul or John ; the flames of hatred and scorn burn fiercely to the very last.

Secondly, it is urged that the two strands may be disentangled ; and that we may throw aside the warp of hatred while we preserve with gratitude the woof of pity and love. Such an attempt is equally vain. The religious spirit of Israel is an organic unity. Most of the Hebrew writers have their moods. Their eyes now flash with anger, and now melt in yearning and hope. But no one mood can be understood without the rest. The pattern in that mystic peplos, the robe of Israel's devotion, cannot be torn in two. We must take it as it is, and study it as a whole.

III. It is only when we are content to do so that we can begin to understand it at all. What are the main lines of the design ? What was the conception of God and of religion which could give rise to such startling inconsistencies—which could produce the coarse realism of Ezekiel xvi., the terrible menaces of Deuteronomy xxviii., the tender grace of Psalm xxiii., and the dramatic sublimity of Isaiah liii. ? If we are to enter the shrine of the worship of the Psalter intelligently, these questions must find an answer.

Our first step must be to recognise that Israel's religion was founded on a creed consisting of a single clause (a clause to which no formal addition was ever made)—“Israel is Jahveh's people. Jahveh is Israel's God.” But from this creed two opposite corollaries were drawn : “Therefore Israel's foes will be punished for their hostility” ; and, “therefore Israel will be punished for its sin.” In either case Jahveh turns full upon man in all the majesty of His superhuman power of bestowing blessing or victory and of inflicting disaster and death, and it will be natural to approach Him, sometimes with awe and penitence, sometimes with confidence and thanksgiving. Awe and penitence were inevitable, since Jahveh, as God, was surrounded

with dangerous taboos ; confidence and thanksgiving were habitual because in His kindness to His people He desired them to be joyful before Him.

In all this, however, there is little that is distinctive of Israel. Israel's attitude to Jahveh, as thus described, is very similar, if we may judge from the language of the Moabite stone, to Moab's attitude to Chemosh ; when Chemosh is pleased with his servants, they conquer ; when he is angry, they fall. We may call such a religion Semitic, or even pagan. For the belief in a terrible God who may be relied on to punish the enemies of his worshippers, who are also his own enemies, without some definite moral reason for dealing with them in this fashion, is frankly paganism, whether held in Asia or in Western Europe ; and if we are half conscious of it in Western Europe to-day, we cannot be surprised to find it persisting throughout the Old Testament.

IV. This attitude is everywhere in the Old Testament ; but it is everywhere subordinate. Jahveh appears as the God of terror ; but He also appears as something infinitely greater. He is the source of victory ; but He is the source of everything else worth having. And Israel, or at least the finer minds in Israel, knew that there were better things than victory in war.

Jahveh was therefore to Israel never the source of victory alone. He was the source of instruction, grace, life. This threefold conviction is found throughout the whole literature, though time was needed to reveal all that was implied therein. A brief consideration of these three gifts will reveal the vital forces of Old Testament devotion ; it will also enable us to distinguish between the narrowness which rings false beside the clear music of the loving-kindness of God, and that loving-kindness itself, the deep full note on which the melody of the worship of the New Testament and of all spiritual religion is built up.

(a) *Jahveh as Source of Instruction.* — The word Instruction sounds strange to readers of the Old Testament. We are more familiar with the word Law. But Law represents only imperfectly the Hebrew expression. Law suggests the statute, the court, the policeman. Instruction or "Torah," its Hebrew equivalent, suggests the teacher and the pupil, transmission and obedience. Such instruction is essential, to the Hebrew, for every department of conduct, private, civic and ceremonial.<sup>1</sup> Judges and kings must give their decisions in accordance with it.<sup>2</sup> Priests must direct worshippers at the altar in conformity to it.<sup>3</sup> Individuals can only hope for success and peace in life as they obey it in their dealings with one another.<sup>4</sup> But where can it be found? The Hebrew, in an age when writing was at least a luxury, would answer at once, "It came through Moses from Jahveh; it was committed to priests, prophets and kings to keep for us; it is the rule of our life."<sup>5</sup>

Into the various developments of the civic and ritual Torah it is not necessary to enter. Nor need we pause over the remarkable fact that the whole moral law, as understood by Israel, was attributed to the revealed will of Jahveh. What must be emphasised is that every duty of which the Hebrew was conscious he looked upon as part of the body of direct instruction given by Jahveh. And this fact has four very important consequences.

First, it led him from time to time to identify with Jahveh's will certain practices which a more developed morality would find difficulty in tolerating; second, it ministered to a distinct contempt for the nations to whom the Torah had not been given; third, it taught him that he could not hope to approach Jahveh unless in the spirit of obedience; and fourth, as the result of

<sup>1</sup> Observe the subjects treated of in the early code, the so-called "Book of the Covenant," Exod. xxi.-xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 2 Kings x. 31, xxiii. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Mal. iv. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ezek. vii. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Deut. iv. 44: also John i. 17.

this, and since obedience to the Torah was the sure passport to Jahveh's favour, we find in the Hebrew's experience an apparent contradiction, a strange mixture of penitence and humiliation for disobedience with confidence and even what we are tempted to call self-righteousness, where there was no conscious disobedience to be confessed.<sup>1</sup>

(b) *Jahveh as Source of Grace*.—The whole Torah is a free gift to Israel; it comes to him from Jahveh's unmerited favour. To the Hebrew, the bond which united Jahveh with His people is neither physical nor fortuitous. He has chosen and condescended to be gracious to Israel. This conception colours all Hebrew thought about Jahveh. Condescension in the superior may suggest, in the inferior, something of the slavish and even of the grovelling. Nor is the Old Testament free from occasional passages which suggest this heathen attitude. But, rightly understood, Jahveh's grace has in it just that quality which makes power liberal and obedience noble.<sup>2</sup> Jahveh stoops to man in order that man may stand up before Jahveh.<sup>3</sup> No man can approach unsummoned the mysterious holiness of the divine presence. But when he has been forgiven for his sins and instructed in Jahveh's demands, he can stand before Jahveh himself undismayed.<sup>4</sup>

The essence of Jahveh's grace consists in the fact, that He has chosen to give man the right to stand unashamed in that high and holy place; to clothe him, so to speak, with the ceremonial garment. Hence is produced a further apparent contradiction. The individual, as he looks at Jahveh, knows that he has no merits of his own; on the contrary, the more he understands of Jahveh's holiness, the more he is conscious of his own sins. And he must confess these sins, if Jahveh's favour is to rest upon him. But if confession has been made, and his conduct has con-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xvii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ezek. ii. 1; Ps. xxiv. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxxiv. 11, ciii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. lxviii. 3.



formed to the right norm, he can be sure of acceptance. Thus a sense of unworthiness is joined to assurance—the assurance which is only not self-righteous because he has now been enabled to do and to be what is pleasing in Jahveh's sight.<sup>1</sup>

This conception of grace, rightly understood, saved man's conduct from the danger of fawning or servility. It also saved Jahveh's conduct from the appearance of caprice. That Jahveh should originally have had a favour for Israel did not create any difficulty to the Hebrew. He simply accepted the fact with gratitude. But that being the case, Jahveh's attitude to individuals could always be foretold. That Jahveh is righteous, *i.e.* straightforward or reliable, was to the instructed Hebrew an unquestionable truth. He might fail to understand all that the truth implied; but he knew nothing of Prophets or Law if he did not joyfully acknowledge it. Jahveh's grace and uprightness together produced a hope which was itself the parent of confidence and faith.

(c) *Jahveh as Source of Life*.—This is less easy to formulate in precise terms. That all physical existence is the gift of Jahveh is constantly affirmed, from the earliest narratives onward.<sup>2</sup> And this existence is beyond all doubt good. Jahveh is to be thanked for "creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life."<sup>3</sup> Only in the dim shadow land of Sheol, after death,—so it was generally believed—is a man inevitably cut off from Jahveh. But in time, as the nation entered the later period when personal devotion began to play a larger part in its religious expression, something of the distinction arose which the New Testament expresses by the use of the two words *βίος* and *ζωή*. The life that is sustained by physical means and comes to an end with the death of the body is not the only gift of its kind. Life is more than that bodily

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. xxxii. *pass.*

<sup>2</sup> Gen. i. ii.; Ps. civ. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. cxxxix. 14.

life which ends at the moment of what we in our ignorance call death. It is more than the beating of the heart, the flowing of the blood, and the play of all those "fearful and wonderful" physical forces which we share with the animals; it is more even than the continuous drama of thoughts, emotions and desires which function on a plane far higher than that which animals can reach. The Hebrew never philosophised about the functioning of these higher powers. He had not the necessary terminology nor habits of thought. But there were times—moments perhaps—when he could feel himself surrounded by the power and loving-kindness of Jahveh, and could respond, not wholly in unworthiness.

The delight of such an experience could not be bounded by such "wild joys of living" as David sings of to Saul in Browning's poem. It passed on into an almost inconceivably beautiful experience of communion with God, a communion so beautiful that death itself was felt to be unable to interrupt it. Hence the rapt expressions that foreshadow the later belief in immortality. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol." "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."<sup>1</sup> And if it is true that this conviction is seen only at its fullest in the New Testament, in such phrases as "he that believeth on the Son hath eternal life,"<sup>2</sup> it is equally true that the conviction animated the piety of every Israelite who knew that Jahveh was not only his song but his strength.<sup>3</sup>

Thus we are faced with a third paradox. Jahveh is the source of all individual life—of saint and sinner alike—because He is the source of all the activity in the universe, and of the universe itself. Good and evil alike proceed from Him. Man must receive one as well as the other. Jahveh sends the pestilence and

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xvi. 10, xvii. 15, xvi. 11.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xv. 2.

the spirit of the lying vision.<sup>1</sup> But at the same time He is the giver and preserver of life. He saves from the evil which He sends. He turns aside the destructive blows which it is His alone to deal, and He delights to lift His servants out of the reach of death itself.<sup>2</sup> He destroys the hosts of the Assyrians; but after allowing Job to be flung upon the dung-hill He restores him to affluence; and He satisfies the awakening saint with His own likeness.

V. Striking as are these contrasts, they will not be surprising to those who are familiar with the more intimate expressions of devotion. For when we are dealing with the prayers of a whole nation or community, it is natural that both higher and lower ranges of spiritual attainment, and higher and lower degrees of spiritual insight, should reveal themselves; and when the soul of the individual is laid bare before his divinity, selfishness and even cruelty will appear by the side of self-consecration and rapture.

In the religion of the Hebrew this can be observed in another fashion. The Hebrew writings, as is well known, fall under three heads: Law, or the books of the Pentateuch, Prophecy (including the older historical books), and the Hagiography or Sacred writings; these last include the books not in the other two classes, *e.g.* Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Chronicles; and this section is more particularly the embodiment of what for want of a better term we may call Hebrew Piety.

Each of these exhibits the higher and the lower side of the hopes and aspirations of Israel. To the Prophets, in their struggle to conceive a stable and moral order, we owe some of the noblest utterances of confession and prayer. The Prophets have taught us to think of God as sharing in the afflictions of man, and fore-ordaining for all nations the blessings of divine justice,

<sup>1</sup> Amos iii. 6; Job ii. 10; 1 Kings xxii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. xxiv. 16; Amos vii. 3, 6.

mercy and peace. Yet the Prophets are responsible for expressions of the deepest racial hatred, and they can be found attributing to Jahveh unsparing and contemptuous condemnation of all His foes.

The Law, especially in the later codes, is chiefly concerned with the ritual approach of the worshipper to God. The narratives accompanying or introducing the codes often breathe an awestruck reverence which reveals, as hardly anything else could reveal, the majesty to which the suppliant dares to approach. At the same time they attribute to Jahveh the meticulous care for the performance of traditional details, and, in some instances, ruthless anger at their neglect; anger which would be unintelligible, did we not remember that to the Jew complete obedience to the revealed Law is the condition of Jahveh's unimpeded grace.<sup>1</sup>

In the third section, the "Hagiography," dealing with what we may call the Piety of the religious community or the individual saint, the worshippers allow themselves frequent utterance to all their desires, for prosperity and recovery from sickness, for retaliation and even for revenge, for the continuance of Jahveh's favour, for the deeper blessings of righteousness, humility, contrition and purity of heart. Men with mean and ignoble conceptions of God imagine Him—as they will always imagine Him—to be such an one as themselves. Yet the triumphant faith in the midst of persecution and disaster, the conviction that the weak and helpless are the special care of Jahveh, the sheer delight in the gifts of

<sup>1</sup> It has often been held that in the Levitical system of Judaism sacrifice atoned for sin. This is a mistake, unless we define our terms with more care. For sin, in the sense of deliberate disobedience to the known will of God, no sacrifice can atone. The sinner is "cut off from the midst of His people,"—excommunicated or put to death. The misdeeds for which the sin offerings make atonement are for the most part breaches of ritual order or personal cleanliness, chiefly unintentional. While no moral blame can be attached to the offender for these, his free access to Jahveh is regarded as interrupted until sacrifice has taken place. The great words of Micah vi. 8 condemn the false view of sacrifice which the Levitical codes themselves never recognised; they are borne out by many passages in the codes, and they are gathered up into all that is best in the piety of post-exilic Judaism.

Jahveh's law, and the deep and rapturous peace in Jahveh's fatherly protection and forgiveness, easily surpass the highest achievements of ethnic devotional literature.

VI. What has just been said may be illustrated by reference to a few typical Old Testament prayers. These we will choose from each of the three divisions of the Old Testament, and from different periods in the nation's literature. The date, however, is a matter of comparative unimportance; in each of them we shall see both the combination of what are to us lower and higher elements, and the varied and striking characteristics which we have already discovered in Hebrew devotion.

We turn first to the Pentateuch, and select the intercession of Abraham for Sodom in Gen. xviii. 23-33.<sup>1</sup> This is in form a conversation with Jahveh rather than a prayer. But the prayers of the Old Testament saints are often so intimate that they remind us inevitably of a dialogue. The attitude of Abraham here finds distinct parallels in the prayers of Isaiah, Habakkuk, and Daniel. Abraham learns that Jahveh is considering a complete destruction of Sodom. Can He destroy the good with the bad? Will He not avert the destruction if there are fifty good men in the place, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or even ten? No one can read the simple yet elevated narrative without noticing the confidence of Abraham, a confidence all the more marked because expressed with such graceful humility. But there is more in the narrative than this. As Abraham is represented, he recognises that a whole city may be destroyed for the wickedness of its inhabitants. He assumes that this wickedness will be shared by the vast majority, even by the children—how different from Jonah iv. 11!

<sup>1</sup> This appears in the document known as "J," and is probably one of the later portions of that composition, dating, it may be, from the latter part of the ninth century.

But he claims that if there are good men mixed with the wicked, Jahveh must spare the city rather than destroy the good and wicked indiscriminately. He is sure that Jahveh's decision will be absolutely just ; and he is eager to see this justice—a justice that fulfils itself in sparing as much as in punishing—fulfilled even on a city that is outside the Hebrew pale and of a thoroughly bad character.

As representing prayer in the second or prophetic section of the Old Testament, we will take the well-known prayer of Jeremiah during the drought (Jer. xiv. xv.). As a revelation of a nature at once tender and impetuous, passionate yet subdued, this prayer has hardly an equal, in the Old Testament or outside it. Jeremiah is firmly convinced that the present and future calamities of his people are sent by Jahveh, as being due to their sin. How else could they have been allowed ? But all other feelings are overpowered for the time by his pity. He is dominated by what is literally "Mitleid" ; he suffers with his compatriots. Could Jahveh bring Himself to cast them off ? Nothing else, he learns, is possible. Jahveh Himself pronounces their doom in the most explicit language. Then the prophet thinks of his own personal burden ; with all his longings for the joys of social life disappointed, he is condemned to be a hunted outcast in his own home. He cries out for vengeance on his persecutors, and learns that he is still to bear witness against them. His prayer for their punishment is answered by an assurance of protection when he denounces their sin.

The theodicy implied in all this is still far from evangelical. But Jeremiah knows quite well that Jahveh does not desire the death of the sinner. His hopes are incapable of fulfilment just because his people will not turn from their wickedness and live. He longs for their salvation from the miseries of drought and war, because this is the approved and familiar way of Jahveh's blessings. In an intensely human passage he

demands their punishment for their rejection of himself. Moses is represented, in similar circumstances, as asking to be himself accursed for the sake of a rebellious Israel. But the one prayer, as much as the other, reveals the outspoken candour, the earnest and fervid pleading which is the mark of all the prayers of Israel. We may criticise Jeremiah's indignation; we cannot but wonder at the unsparing self-revelation, and the confident appeal, in his colloquy with Jahveh.

To choose an example from the Psalms is specially difficult. Every desire that can be uttered to God finds its speech in the Psalter; for deliverance from disease, forgiveness for sin, victory over enemies, internal prosperity and peace, unbroken personal communion with God. But to see in its fullness the sense of separation from God, the yearning to regain His favour, and the certainty that He must hear the prayer of His servant, we must turn to Psalm li. The Psalm is so familiar to Christian readers, and has been used so constantly to express their own experience, that its significance for Old Testament literature is difficult to appreciate. There were four deep-set convictions in the Psalmist's mind. He had sinned, and this sin is one which we cannot but understand in the New Testament sense rather than that of the Babylonian penitential Psalms; he could expect God to forgive the sin, not by way of return for any payment or offering, but because of his own confession and prayer; such forgiveness meant complete restoration to God's favour; and the whole transaction was entirely consistent with God's righteousness. It may be perhaps that the Psalm was intended in part for the temple worship; and a brief appendix (*vv.* 18, 19) was added later, containing a prayer for Jerusalem and a promise of renewed sacrifices. This seems in contradiction with *vv.* 16, 17—*i.e.* with the statement that such sacrifices are not needed to secure forgiveness; the writer of *vv.* 16, 17 could never have passed straight on to *vv.* 18, 19, and it is

noteworthy that the liturgical editors made use of a Psalm where the great statement of *vv.* 16, 17 forms the climax of the whole poem.

Let us finally consider the beautiful prayer of Daniel (ch. ix.). This prayer, probably the latest in the Old Testament, written shortly before the Maccabean revolt, may be called a symphony on the four motifs of Israel's sin, Jahveh's righteousness, Jahveh's mercifulness, and the yearning for the restoration of Jerusalem. The thought passes from stage to stage with a movement at once passionate and majestic. Confession itself becomes dignified ; humility is almost peremptory. There is no selfishness here, nor even complaint. On the contrary, the very punishments that have befallen Israel are understood as the sign of that divine righteousness in which every Jew gloried, and Jahveh's righteousness itself is not more certain and sure than is his loving-kindness.

VII. Summing up our previous conclusions, with these examples of Hebrew prayers to assist us, we can see that the religious life which we have attempted to analyse is built up on four great convictions—convictions which, as far as we know, have never been grasped where the influence of Israel has not penetrated, and which could not well be reached by any process of deduction. First, God has a character of His own, loving justice and mercy, hating selfishness, cruelty and vice ; and this character can be revealed to human beings. Second, God has a will of His own, to be fulfilled by “joy in widest commonalty spread,” but visiting disobedience and sin with inevitable suffering : and this will is the sovereign power in the universe. Third, God looks to men both for obedience and co-operation, unwilling and, as it would seem, unable to complete His designs until men have recognised and cheerfully answered the divine summons. Fourth, in response to this recognition, God inspires in man the



strength, steadfastness and grace of character without which all true satisfaction or blessedness is impossible.

It must not be supposed that these four convictions were consciously held in their entirety by the Old Testament saints. It may be that no one of them was fully grasped either by Prophet or Psalmist. But in devotion a man's reach will always exceed his grasp. The shrine in which he worships has its foundations far in the deep places of the earth. The simple language of his daily prayers hints at mysteries that angels desire to look into.

Nor need we hesitate to admit that the conception of the scope of God's justice and mercy and love, in the minds of many Hebrew thinkers, is limited and confined. It may be thought of as concentrated upon Israel or even on a portion, a nucleus, of Israel. It may be thought to demand conditions which are alien to our ideas of morality. But the conceptions have life in them. The limitations, as by some inner vital necessity, are steadily pushed back, until it becomes clear that the chosen seat of God's worship is to be the joy of the whole world, and that the earth's farthest coasts are to wait expectantly for God's instruction.

Whether we regard these convictions as specifically revealed or not, the heart of all genuine devotion lies in the midst of them. This is as true of Christianity as of the religion of Israel. What they rule out, when they are really understood, is also repudiated in the New Testament—the attempt to induce God to perform man's will as distinct from His own; the idea that prayer will be heard for much speaking or for many gifts;<sup>1</sup> the self-righteousness which claims a return from God, a "quid pro quo," and refuses to obey the call to confession and repentance and prayer for pardon;<sup>2</sup> the confidence which is based on the belief that the worshipper has some special claim upon God,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxvi. 18; Matt. vi. 5 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxxiv. 18; Isa. lvii. 15; 1 Kings viii. 33; Ps. xxxii. 5; 1 John i. 9.

and forgets that the only path by which God can be approached is that of unselfishness and piety.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, what the New Testament demands follows immediately from these convictions ; repentance before a law so exacting that no mere human effort could ever fulfil it ; faith in One who has made known His will to men and waits to perform it in them ; confidence in the power which no foe can defy and no accident can evade, and in the love which itself bears the burdens that it removes ; holiness which dreads the contamination of the desire that is repugnant to God ; and the deep and loving submission which accepts whatever interpretation God may put upon its own wishes, knowing that in God's will is man's peace.

VIII. What strikes modern readers as imperfect in the devotion of the Old Testament may be gathered up under four heads : vindictiveness towards enemies ; desires for purely material goods with no clear reference to their spiritual values or purposes ; the bargaining attitude ; and exaggerated self-depreciation, or self-assertiveness, towards God. To say that worship in the Old Testament exhibits these weaknesses is simply to say that it was the worship of men whose minds were not yet wholly transformed. But as the justice and the grace of God are better understood, the weaknesses tend to disappear. When God is thought of as the Lord of all nations, not even Nineveh will be regarded as cut off from repentance. When the real nature of God's gifts is known, and His reason for bestowing them, the suppliant will cease either to chaffer or grovel or boast in His benign presence. The Hebrews were not wholly free from the pagan worship of the tribal God. Such paganism, however, is not the essential element in their outlook. On the contrary, it is pushed steadily into the background, as

<sup>1</sup> Amos v. 18 ff. ; Isa. i. 14-16 ; Luke xix. 9.

the forces of positive devotion, faith in God's character and obedience to His will, take possession of the field.

The old paganism dies hard. It is not yet dead in Christendom. Never thoroughly exterminated in Judaism, it survived the rise of the New Testament. But when the message of the New Testament is fully understood, it cannot live. The Gospel is the true preservative of the devotion of Israel's religion. It is essential in the New Testament that all true prayer should be in the name of Christ. This phrase is no magical formula. It means that the suppliant takes up the position and attitude of Christ, both with regard to the world around him and with regard to God. If his prayer is really in Christ's name, he sits as light to the gifts of wealth and worldly foresight as did Christ. Revengefulness and greed, callousness and fear, will be equally far from the atmosphere of his petitions. Save perhaps in moments of great stress, he will not even need to say, "If it be Thy will." The desire that will animate every request will be for more of that instruction and guidance by which he will naturally long to direct his conduct, and for more of that love which springs only from obedience to God and from communion, reverent, loving and confident, with God; and this he knows God must be waiting to give.

Again, he will have learnt to think of God as Christ thought of Him. His past sins forgiven, and the will to sin removed, he can look to God as his Father, knowing that all the powers of heaven "stand engaged to make him blessed." In such love there will be as little of fear as there can be of cajolery. If he sins—as he will—he is not wholly cast down. There will be grief that any barrier should have been raised between him and his Father; but at the prayer of repentance the barrier is flung down, and sorrow is replaced by a deeper confidence in the mercy which will never fail him. He can approach with boldness—with frank and

open speech—to the throne of grace, to find help in time of need.

IX. The Christian conception of the practice of prayer is that of the Old Testament purified from its lower and accidental elements. It is founded on the conviction that God's purpose is to commend His will to us and to perform it within us. But the practice of prayer can only become stable and fixed when it is seen at work in Christ, and when what the New Testament calls "the Holy Spirit" is felt to be at work in the heart of the believer. Yet prayer can be both genuine and exalted even if nothing is known either of the Jesus of history or the Christ of theology. And that great light which many prophets and kings desired in vain to see was actually illuminating their path, though they knew it not. In all true prayer the spirit is one and the same. At every step in the history of prayer this spirit reveals itself in some particular fashion; and in the earlier and simpler stages we may see clearly what is half concealed by the richness and complexity of later attainments.

When this is borne in mind, the study of the prayers of the Old Testament will serve to bring into prominence an aspect of prayer that is often forgotten. Prayer is and always must be more than simple petition. To any true prayer indeed the path of petition, frank and confident, must always be open. But prayer is our word for the intercourse of the soul with God; and this means that there must be a relation between God and ourselves that is based on mutual understanding. God knows His servant through and through; and the suppliant knows the character of the Lord whom he approaches. He is not in doubt as to the mood or humour which he may encounter. There is no caprice or inconsequence for him to fear; nor does he offer his prayers in the dark, ignorant as to whether they will be acceptable or not. If God's ways are not his ways, yet

those ways have been made known. If his own heart is right, pure and sincere, without self-seeking or concealment, he knows that God will grant every prayer. "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." At the same time he knows that God is absolutely righteous, and that God's will is always directed to the supreme goal of holiness. He may have imperfect ideas—who has not?—as to the character and requirements of that righteousness; but he has no doubt as to the cardinal fact that what God desires it is his privilege and duty at once to accept and to carry out.

It is this understanding, constantly on the increase, and never absent, which we observe through the Old Testament. It is as observable in the prayers of Abraham as in those of Hezekiah or Nehemiah. But it is not mechanical or automatic. It is dependent on the use of all the lessons of the past, on the insight into the spiritual realities of all the great pioneers who have opened up the track of prayer. Just as the poets of a later age are not necessarily in advance of their predecessors, but are influenced and inspired by the greatest poets that have preceded them, so the prayers of a later age may not reveal a steady and uninterrupted progress; but they do reveal the influence of the accumulated experience of the past. On the other hand, progress, though it may be interrupted and chequered, is none the less real. The lower motives reappear, sometimes with surprising and disappointing clearness, even to the last. In exactly the same way the aged saint may be acutely conscious of the temptations which disturbed his youth. But the level is raised. If we look at the actual achievements of prayer, the knowledge of Jahveh's truth and grace, the sense of disobedience and sin, the conception of the majestic and adorable law of God, all grow steadily brighter and stronger as we pass from earlier to later prophets, and from the Exile to the disappointments and yearnings that followed the Return. And in the case

of those who had learned in those years to look into the deeper things of God, even the old narrowness and rancour, when they found expression, were robbed of half their virulence. They found no "depth of earth."

Survival and advance ; perhaps we see these factors nowhere so clearly writ as in the Old Testament. But to see them is itself to learn a lesson of wide import. It is to understand what must often be a perplexity to the student of Christian experience whether in the individual or in the Church at large. How disappointing are the set-backs that we constantly meet in others and in ourselves. "How many a spot defiles the robe that wraps an earthly saint." Where progress is thought of as a straight unbroken line, such set-backs naturally lead us to question the reality of any advance. Augustine, Calvin, Wesley have moments of surprising weakness. Are there not certain things which Paul himself might well have left unsaid? And similarly those periods of Church history to which we may be inclined to attribute the most definite advance—the Reformation, or the Oxford Movement—remind us only too plainly of the retrograde and "atavistic" tendencies from which they could not escape.

The student of Old Testament devotion will not be surprised at all this. Here, as elsewhere, the Old Testament is the true "Pilgrim's Progress" of the Christian Church. He will not be surprised if his own experience repeats such disappointments. He may vanquish Apollyon only to find himself beset by the creeping and clinging meannesses and malevolences of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. None the less, that Valley lies beyond the plain where he met the fiend, and farther on still are the Delectable Mountains.

When progress is so understood, we may indeed take courage from the strange map of spiritual life presented in the Old Testament. We may take courage, too, from the experience of the Old Testament saints. They had no centuries of Christian life behind them ; they had

no background of a world, or even of a single continent, permeated by Christian influences ; they had no record of a Divine life on earth lived in unbroken communion with the Father ; they had hardly guessed at the secret of prayer uttered "in His Name." On the contrary, their God was unknown outside the limits of a territory little broader than an English county ; the people whom He was believed to have chosen seemed marked out for defeat and suffering ; and after years of desperate resistance to hopelessly superior forces, half their little state was destroyed and the other half dragged out, as a church, an existence which as a kingdom was finally brought to an end. And yet what more courageous—one is almost tempted to say, audacious—words could have been found than were uttered by those representatives of a disappointed and defeated race ? "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance : behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing."<sup>1</sup> "Who is like unto the Jahveh our God, that hath his seat on high, that humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth?"<sup>2</sup> "O thou that hearest prayer, to thee shall all flesh come."<sup>3</sup>

This is not bluster. The Hebrew had no illusions as to the perils that beset his community. He had hung his harp by the waters of Babylon. He had seen the temple of Jahveh razed to the ground. But he could still look forward with sublime hope to the day of Jahveh's sovereignty over the whole earth. And when, in the midst of disasters that might well have smitten prayer into silence, he demands protection and restoration for his people, his faith becomes a beacon for every age of doubt and disillusion.

Those who have entered most deeply into the secrets of that indomitable spirit know well that it "has not already attained, neither is it already perfect." It "follows on," to use the words of one who drank deeply

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xl. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxiii. 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lxxv. 2.

of it, "in order that it may take hold of that for which also it has been taken hold of by Christ Jesus." "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Confidence in Jesus is the spirit of prayer. True, the secret of "in His Name" was unknown to Hebrew seer and thinker. But the secret trembled on their lips. They could never have prayed as they did unless they had learnt how to approach God in the true spirit of the son at home in his Father's house. We can pass from room to room in that house with a knowledge impossible to them; but we can never understand the mysteries of the filial spirit, its startling frankness and yearning penitence, its hatred of all that hinders loving and its heroic contempt for all that threatens its hidden security, until we have drawn nigh, by the side of prophet and priest, to Him in whom Law and Prophecy were for ever fulfilled.





### III

## PRAYER AS UNDERSTANDING

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## SYNOPSIS

Two main conceptions of the relations of Man to God, corresponding to :

- (1) The relation of the suppliant to an Oriental potentate.
- (2) The relation of the student of Science to Nature.

The former relationship is characteristic of the ethnic cults from among which the Hebrew religion sprang. The religion of the Old Testament has its permanent value as a protest against this view in favour of a more spiritual view of God's nature.

Nevertheless this "Sultanic" conception of God is not completely purged away, either in the religion of the Old Testament or in popular Christianity. Its continued presence hinders the approach to God in trustful prayer.

The relation between the student and Nature supplies us with valuable elements in our conception of the true relation between God and man, emphasising, as it does, the unchangeableness and trustworthiness of the Divine character, and a moral view of the omnipotence of God.

The filial relationship taught by Christ combines the good elements of both conceptions.

The popular conception of the teaching of the Church has over-emphasised the "Sultanic" conception, and a realisation of this defect may be expected to lead to a more intelligent and confident habit of prayer.

### III

## PRAYER AS UNDERSTANDING

WHEN we try to conceive for ourselves the meaning which men in general attach to the word "Prayer" we find that the word implies, first of all, that there are two parties to the transaction which we call "Prayer": one who is conceived as having boundless power to grant what is desired by the other; the other as having great need to be supplied with the good things which it is within the competence of the former to concede. The converse between these two parties is that which we call Prayer.

Our conception of prayer will vary in accordance with our view as to the character of these two parties and their relation the one to the other.

We find that, broadly speaking, among races which have got beyond the animistic stage, there are two main conceptions of the relation between the two parties concerned: the one which we will call the Sultanic, and the other which we will call the Scientific, conception.

Let us examine first of all the Sultanic conception of prayer. We shall find that it is naturally coloured by the circumstances of primitive life. To the Oriental mind the person of the local despot presents itself as the depository of all power and the source of all beneficence. He is known by experience to have a limitless power of giving or withholding the

good things of life. There is no higher court of appeal to which the subject can approach. The sovereign holds all justice *in gremio pectoris*, in the sense that justice itself cannot be conceived as having any practical free course except it can succeed in commending itself to the temper of the sovereign despot. The petitioner knows very well indeed, by long and bitter experience, that the Sultan's memory needs considerable jogging, and his palm oiling with plentiful "baksheesh."

Moreover, he is generally of uncertain temper. His moods must be carefully watched. He will, at times, like the Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, be in the mood of calling out with ungovernable fury, "Off with his head!" at the approach of the most reasonable and grovelling suppliant. At other times—after a good meal, or after listening to an ode composed in his honour, or after the successful destruction of his enemies—he may be expected to be complaisant to almost any demand, however extravagant or inequitable. At ordinary times he is to be approached with care, and the well-advised will not be sparing in money to procure the most skilful intermediaries to smooth the way. Acting under the advice of the skilled advocate, he will prepare costly presents, and he will take care that they are of a suitable kind. One Sultan will like gold; another will demand blood; while the favour of others will most easily be secured with ivory, apes and peacocks. One will crave the dead bodies of his enemies; another will prefer the heads of his nearest relations. The suppliant will be careful, in general, not to obtrude upon the Presence in his own person; he will not only best secure his interests, but will, in the long run, without doubt, save his purse as well, if he employ a mediator or advocate to plead his cause in his stead.

For the king, as we have noted, has his moods. He may to-morrow give without hesitating that which no cajolery and no expenditure of treasure could wring

from him to-day. Everything depends upon the whim of the moment. In approaching him it is not wise to appeal to justice or to law, a course which might seem to belittle his own arbitrary and sovereign will ; appeal must rather be made to his vanity or to his mercy, to his well-known willingness, in answer to supplications offered with sufficient urgency, to save the lives of the worst criminals, and to grant, even to the most abject of his subjects, the most unexpected and unbounded favours. He may be reminded, if a fitting and decent caution be used, of the glorious character of his ancestors, who, while they slew the proud at sight, had often raised the most undeserving beggars from the dunghill. But, above all things, it will be necessary to be unceasing in praise of the character of the sovereign himself ; the celebration of his clemency must arise, like incense, continually, and money spent on the manufacture of laudatory hymns will seldom be known to be without its due reward.

There can be no doubt that this picture of the despotic Sultan has powerfully influenced that view of prayer which we find current in ancient times. God was, quite naturally, and, as it seems to us, almost inevitably, apprehended under the forms with which men were familiar. They thought of God as one who needed to be approached by the same abject and circuitous methods as those by which they approached the powers whom they knew so well. Flattery and cajolery, sacrifices and offerings, priests and mediators, seemed to be the natural avenues to His presence.

This ideal of the character of God, which we have called the Sultanic view, has its origin outside the limits of the Chosen Race, but we shall be well advised to note that it is a conception of prayer which is by no means confined to pagan religions. In the Old Testament we trace the stages by which the Jews, with painful steps and not without singular relapses, rid themselves in very considerable measure of the degrading

associations which had surrounded the gods of the ethnic cults. We shall do well, I say, to remember that the escape was very slow and very partial, and there is many a chapter in the Old Testament which bears within it traces, if not more than traces, of this corrupt view of the relation between God and man. God sends three years of famine and is only appeased by the hanging of the seven sons of Saul. He visits sins of inadvertence with terrible punishments which can only be averted by animal sacrifices ; He is equally particular about, and attaches equal penalties to, the oppression of the poor and the sowing of two kinds of seed in a field, or the wearing of a garment made of two kinds of stuff.<sup>1</sup> He appears to be much more careful to have priests who have no deformity than to have priests who are moral in their life : <sup>2</sup> He makes laws and regulations enforcing the primitive customs of taboo, laws which appear to us wholly arbitrary, forbidding people to eat the coney, the hare or the pig : <sup>3</sup> He refuses to be approached by any priests but those who could claim descent from Levi : <sup>4</sup> He was subject to sudden paroxysms of rage, as when He provided the people with quails and "while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague" : <sup>5</sup> He destroys the people of Heshbon because they, like the Belgians of modern times, refused passage to the armies of Israel on their way to invade the lands of their enemies : <sup>6</sup> His sanctuary was more like a slaughter-house than a church. Yet, in spite of that which appears to us to be the savagery and the capriciousness of the character of Jahveh, we must remember that to the people of Israel Jahveh appeared, even in that conduct which seems to us most capricious, to be entirely reliable and just as compared to the gods of the heathen, and the procedure

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xix. 13, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Lev. xi. 5-8.

<sup>6</sup> Num. xi. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. xxi. 16-24.

<sup>4</sup> Num. iii. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Deut. ii. 26-37.

which seems to us to be founded on a wholly irrational basis, seemed to the people of the time very seemly, very wise, and very worthy of a Divine Power (see p. 51, "Prayer and the Old Testament"). Indeed we cannot but marvel at the continual emergence, from this seemingly irrational chaos, of spiritual principles destined in the long run to swallow up the barbarous ideas, causing even the most savage ideas to subserve the needs of spiritual progress.

Even the 51st Psalm, which will surely never lose, for the religious sense, its charm and pathos, sinks to a very low and naïve strain when it ends by promising to Jahveh, in return for His gifts, that He shall receive a present of young bullocks for His altar. If we were not so used, by continual repetition, to the idealisation of such language, and if we were to picture to our minds the actual scene which this vow implies, we should realise that even in this most lovely fragment of early devotion the religious evolution of the race has not as yet proceeded very far. It is indeed possible that the last verse of the psalm may have been added in order to make its deeply spiritual tone more acceptable to the conservative and orthodox religionists of the day ; and if this be so, it shows that the purely spiritual motive was felt to need some balance which could be obtained by the concession which the bullocks provided to the popular religious taste. Examples of the toning down of mystical writings to suit a lower level of popular theology are not unknown even in our own day.

It will not do to suppose that we find a steady and uninterrupted evolution of thought throughout the Old Testament, showing us the lowest level of the conception of the Divine Being in the earliest literature and the highest conception in the latest. We do not, as a matter of fact, find evidence sufficient to justify such a theory, attractive as it is. In the earliest books we find many examples of the most beautiful experiences of religious feeling, and in the latest some which are



the most arid and unspiritual. The two conceptions existed together, even as they are to be found in close juxtaposition in the popular religions of our own day.

It is needless to go in detail through the ancient annals of the Jews to show how painfully they were escaping from the Sultanic view of the relation between God and man, and from the servile character which this idea of the relation involved on the part of man. If we were suddenly asked to say under what circumstances it was that Jahveh was represented to have killed indiscriminately thirty thousand persons—good and bad, men, women and children alike—we might have difficulty in remembering for the moment, if we were not students of the Bible, whether it was on account of their incautious demand for a change of diet, or for their murmuring at the tragic fate of some temerarious nonconforming ministers, or on account of the dangerously modern and humane treatment meted out to a fallen tyrant or to the scions of a supplanted dynasty, or again, whether it was for a merely ribald remark concerning the baldness of a prophetic head. Nor is it important that we should remember. The point in all these incidents that we are intended to seize is that the punishments of Jahveh are more terrible than those of even the most “frightful” of human kings. The moral intended to be taught is that which is expressed in the words of the Communion Service, that “His dreadful judgments are hanging over our heads and always ready to fall upon us”; and these judgments may not be any more lenient towards the unwary layman who stretches out an impious hand to steady the tottering ark, than towards the man who kills innocent women and children with the sword. We are intended to understand that it will be our wisdom to abandon argument once for all, and, with all the humility we can assume, to sue for peace upon the terms which Omnipotence shall dictate.

It is indeed abundantly true that this aspect of

“frightfulness” in the character of Jahveh was being continually modified by the limitation of the judgments and chastisements attributed to Him, and the gradual tendency to lay less and less stress upon the ritual, or merely tribal, codes of morals. The prophets were continually urging that a life of piety and the recognition of social responsibilities were more likely to ensure a favourable answer to prayer than the offering of bullocks and rams or the observance of feasts and fasts. The religion of the Old Testament is distinguished among its Semitic contemporaries by the very fact that it was continually striving to disentangle itself from the Sultanic view of God and from the theory of prayer which belongs to that view ; and the chief value of the Old Testament consists in this, that it records the history of a persistent protest against the popular conceptions of God’s character and of the consequent relation of man to God—a protest so marvellous and unexampled at that period of human evolution that it may claim to be considered one of the most astonishing phenomena in the development of man. Yet, though we do now recognise the truth that the value of the Old Testament lies in the record of the protest of the minority, and not in the beliefs of the majority, of the Israelitish people, there is, nevertheless, a danger, even to-day, that the Old Testament should be used as a book of precedents, instead of being regarded as a mine in which the finding of gold nuggets outweighs the labour of the elimination of much dross. The tendency to justify cruelty by appeal to the Old Testament has undoubtedly done very great harm in the past in retarding the humanisation of our social legislation ; but the danger grows less day by day, and it only needs mention here because there is still a tendency to forget that even the most beautiful devotional language of the Old Testament lies deeply imbedded in the dross of much very gross paganism, and that we must not be surprised to find that the constant devotional repetition

of the Psalms, with all the good effect which this habit has undoubtedly produced, has been productive also of a tendency to condone, and to prolong, the habit of approaching God as the Oriental suppliant approaches his sovereign, with anxious deprecation of His wrath and bloodthirsty demands for revenge and for the punishment or extermination of our enemies.

The danger lest the Sultanic view of God might corrupt the social conscience of mankind or hinder its moral evolution has been constantly felt in the history of the Church. Ulphilas, the apostle of the Goths, "prudently suppressed" (as Gibbon says) "the four books of the Kings as they might tend to irritate the fierce and sanguinary spirit of the Barbarians." The Anglican missionaries of the last century, less wise in their generation, translated into the language of the natives of New Zealand the whole Canonical Scriptures. The Maori prophets afterwards taught that their people were the Israelites and the British were the Amalekites, and were ready to act upon the example recommended and enforced by the God of Israel. (I remember speaking to a Maori who, possessing a New Testament, earnestly desired to possess the Old Testament, as, he said, the New Testament had in it too much about Christ, which did not interest him.) It is certain that the Church could never have tolerated so long the savage cruelty of our criminal code if it had not recommended and sanctioned horrible punishments for ecclesiastical offences, which punishments were justified by the examples of Jahveh's treatment of His enemies in the hours of His fierce wrath. The extreme militarist parties in all lands never tire of assuring us that they derive ever new and satisfying comfort from the reading of the Old Testament in time of war—a comfort which they find with greater difficulty in the reading of the New.

We have sketched out this Sultanic view of the relation of God to man. Its essential feature is that

it does not pretend or presume to understand the character of God. It takes it for granted that certain things will be given by God and certain things withheld ; but it does not attempt to discover any principle in the giving or the withholding. Everything is arbitrary. God is angry with you for something you have done : you may, or you may not, know what it is ; you may, or may not, be responsible for the act. He may punish you with war, or with cancer, or by slaying your children : you can do nothing but ask Him to have mercy ; you may promise to amend, but it is *His* wrath which has to be turned aside, *His* mind that has to be changed, and the more humiliation you may suffer, and the more sorrow you endure, the greater is the hope that this painful process may appease the violence of His great wrath and inaugurate a happier condition of things. Who shall say that this conception of our relation to God is entirely obsolete and unknown ?

An example of the conception held of God's character in one considerable section of the Church may be found in the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. "Consider," he says, "the anger of God avenging this first sin [of Adam] on all the descendants of the first sinner : pestilence, war, famine, desolation of the earth ; so many disasters, so many violent deaths, so many tears shed, so many crimes committed, so many children forever deprived of the sight of God, so many souls cast into hell. What consequences and what chastisements for one single sin ! . . ." "One single sin, committed before the Incarnation, before he had experienced the justice of God ; above all, a sin which he expiated by nine hundred years of penitence." "There is, perhaps, in the depths of hell a soul that God has eternally condemned for such or such a mortal sin committed one single time." "Ask yourself what this God is who punishes a single mortal sin in this manner." "How long is it since you first committed a mortal sin ? Why did not God strike you dead after this first

sin?" This book is used as the text-book of the Jesuit Order, and was thought by George Tyrrell to be far more liberal and tolerant than most other Catholic text-books; and this passage may serve to show how pagan views of God survive even in the writings of great saints.

Let us now examine that idea of our relation to God which I have called the Scientific conception, a name chosen because it expresses the conception which the student of physical science has towards Nature. I am not intending to refer to that rigid and mechanical conception of Nature which was almost universal a generation ago and has not altogether vanished to-day—that theory which made the pursuit of physical science nothing but the discovery and cataloguing of fixed, unalterable phenomena—but to that newer conception which is being more and more widely entertained, that conception which regards Nature as the expression—not always the perfect and unimpeded expression—of reason, and as being, therefore, necessarily akin to the reasonable nature of man, open to his discoveries, to some extent at least pliant to his manipulations, comprehensible ultimately to his understanding, and only realising its full purpose, only becoming Nature in its fullest meaning, when it is bound up indissolubly with the mind of man.

But while the modern student who has cast aside the materialistic conception of a rigid and mechanical world does thus believe that the face of Nature may change almost infinitely under the influence of human thought, disclosing always new mysteries hitherto unknown, he yet knows that scientific discovery involves accurate and patient research to discover the laws through which Nature will work his will; it postulates uniformity of results wherever there is uniformity of causes; it has no place for caprice, or inaccuracy, or forgetfulness, or sudden gusts of anger or pity. He could not work at all unless he postulated this uniformity: it is the very basis of all his hopes, the ground of all his confidence.

He has also to postulate everywhere a rational basis in Nature, that everywhere there is discoverable eventually a law of causation which can be demonstrated to be in line with man's understanding of what is meant by reason and law. It is true that, inasmuch as the student of the physical sciences is dealing not with moral but merely with material relations, the question of the moral character of the Source of all phenomena does not enter into his researches as it must enter into the researches of the student of moral questions, but this fact does not detract from the value of the analogy which we propose to draw between the pursuit of Science and the adventure of Prayer. It is the tone and temper of the man of science, and not the subject-matter of his enquiries, which is of value to us at this point of our enquiry.

This, then, is the conception which a student of physical science holds towards that which he may call "Truth," or "the Law of Nature," or "Ultimate Reality." He, like the pagan suppliant, feels that this supreme Reality has something which he greatly needs, and which it is competent to bestow. He desires to establish relations with it. He feels his own need of knowledge. This need may grow to be a great necessity, a crying aloud, of his whole nature. So far he is at one with the pagan devotee. But he never imagines for a moment that Nature can be tricked or cajoled. Give her what presents you will, sing to her what odes you may, flatter her, praise her, grovel to her, hire mediators to teach you her weaknesses and her whims, yet this will not avail to make her give you the good things which she still hides. She is, indeed, the student knows, not a willing concealer of her treasures; he is convinced that Nature is waiting to disclose her gifts to those who know how to approach her. But to Wisdom alone can she reveal herself; and her self-revelation is never given in answer to any litanies of entreaty. She has no moods, she asks for no inter-

cessors or mediators to appease her wrath, she demands no bloody victims, there is no privileged approach to her shrines. The student of science approaches his deity with sane and confident steps; with reverence indeed, but with the intelligent and fearless reverence which is inspired by the austere and adorable majesty of Justice and of Law. He knows that if at present he lack response to his prayer, it is not because his deity is angry or in need of appeasement; it is because of some want of understanding on his own part, some want of knowledge, or some disinclination to follow after truth at all costs and in spite of all perils, some lack of insight which wisdom alone can correct and amend.<sup>1</sup>

This calm and confident approach of the student of science to Nature, and its relation to Religion, is expressed by Wordsworth, who, speaking of his studies in geometry at Cambridge, says :

From the same source I drew  
A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense  
Of permanent and universal sway,  
And paramount belief; there, recognised  
A type for finite creatures of the one  
Supreme Existence, the surpassing life  
Which—to the boundaries of space and time,  
Of melancholy space and doleful time,  
Superior and incapable of change  
Not touched by welterings of passion—is,  
And hath the Name of God. Transcendent Peace  
And silence did await upon these thoughts  
That were a frequent comfort to my youth.

Does the student make petition to Nature? In one sense he does, even as the pagan does. He asks, he seeks, he knocks; but while he asks, he knows that it is his own mind that must clear the way for the answer to

<sup>1</sup> "The man of science seeks Truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude; the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of Truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science."—Wordsworth, Preface to Poems.

come ; he seeks, but it is in his own mind that he knows the treasure will be found ; he knocks, indeed, but he knows that it is not until his own mind is cleared of ignorance and self-will that the door will be opened, and then it will open of its own accord. The response to his research will not come either because he deploras his state, or because he wrings his hands and casts ashes into the air, or clothes his body in sackcloth, nor yet because he praises his deity in psalm and hymn. It will come from a source which can only make its response through the suppliant's mind when it is cleared from the darkness of error by the discipline of wisdom and of self-devotion.

If we seek to analyse the psychological process of the "prayer" of the student of physical science, we find that (*a*) he has a confident belief that there always is a rational solution of every problem of science ; (*b*) he is certain that Nature will always meet research rationally undertaken with a rational answer, and will never betray his confidence, so that he can count upon Nature to respond with unvarying uniformity to the accurate demonstrations of the intellect ; (*c*) his desire to know Truth grows until the heat of that desire may be fitly described as an unceasing knocking at the door ; (*d*) he is confident that the answer will come along the line of revelation to him of some rational law and by his co-operation with some rational process.

This clear, sincere, intelligent intercourse with Nature is in strong contrast to the dark and tortuous method of the Oriental suppliant with his God. It seeks not to alter the mind of its god, nor to remind him of his duties, nor to flatter his wisdom, nor to deprecate his outbursts of wrath : it adores with reverence ; it asks with confidence ; it waits with assurance.

The Oriental who holds the Sultanic view of God has never been able to make any solid progress in physical science, because he assumes that the God, who in answering his own personal prayers is immoral and



corrupt, is also likely to be wayward and capricious in his government of Nature as a whole. It is useless to discover any laws of mechanics when Allah may choose at any moment to smash to pieces the best-constructed bridge, and futile to learn scientific agriculture when Durga will bless or blight your crop, not because you have observed or neglected the laws of Nature, but because you have either flattered or upset her dignity or her whims. That is why we find advance in physical science in Mahometan or Hindu society comparatively small, and the same observation holds true in those parts of Christendom where a kindred view of God has prevailed. Where Christians still hold a conception of God tainted with this belief they will meet a famine, not by better irrigation, but by extra litanies, and will attempt to stay a pestilence, not by sanitation, but by carrying in procession the image of their favourite Saint; they will not seek for the moral and scientific causes of great disasters, but will attribute an outburst of cholera to the prevalence of the Higher Criticism, or the devastation of a great world-wide war to the disendowment of some local priesthood. No progress can be made in physical science where there is not a belief in a rational order of the universe; and so long as prayer and the moral intercourse of the soul with God are conducted on the assumption that God is, just in this particular relation, irrational and weakly sentimental and subject to manipulation by priesthods, just so far as prayer alone of all human activities remains outside the sphere of reason and law, no progress can be made in the Science of Prayer.

The reader who has followed us thus far may perhaps here urge that, after all, the student of physical science is confronted with quite as great and difficult a problem as the Sultan's unhappy suppliant, if we consider the grim cruelty and the terrific catastrophes of Nature. Nature, as conceived by the student of

pure physical science, appears at times to be both blind and cruel, and to be as capricious and wayward as any Oriental potentate. It punishes stupidity or error with extraordinary violence ; it seems to have no regard at all to pious and devout folly, and to reward with callous liberality the immoral student who is also wise, persevering and accurate. The electric current will kill the pious widow on her way to church just as surely as the burglar on his way to rob her house. The obscene novel concealed in the breast-pocket of the frivolous soldier is just as likely to ward off a bullet as a copy of the Prayer Book. The surgeon operating in a case of syphilis may fall a victim to that horrible disease and may transmit it to his family just as surely as the man of evil life who, as we say, has brought it upon himself. This is all true ; but the difference between the student of physical science and the suppliant of the Sultan is that, while the latter feels that he has got to put the Sultan into a good temper again, the scientific student knows that Nature is not angry and does not require appeasement, but that it is for him to find some remedy in his own mind for the erroneous thought or action which has involved him in disaster. The disaster is not a call for more litanies, but for more accurate methods and more searching investigation. We are certain that however cruel Nature may seem to be, that apparent cruelty can be overcome, and is intended to be overcome, not by any deprecation of Nature, but by a persevering and constant co-operation with her laws, and this is true also of Religion.

It is, surely, of real value to us in our search to notice here that Nature does seem to lay great store upon right understanding, where we should be disposed to give more weight to devout and sentimental ignorance, and this consideration may have value for us, not only as investigators of Nature, but as students of the science of approaching the Eternal God. It is

disconcerting to us who believe in a moral law behind the Universe to find that Nature appears to set this extraordinarily high value on scientific insight and so little on *bhakti* or devout affection. We have come to think of godliness, or saintliness, as being quite compatible with gross stupidity ; and we regard Nature as cruel because we think that ignorance or error is merely the result of misfortune, which ought not to be punished at all, whereas sin is something for which man must always hold himself responsible. Bishop Creighton remarked that "after we have let the ape and the tiger die, we have to deal with the donkey, which is a much more intractable and enduring animal than the others." We quite expect to be called upon to cleanse our hearts from sin before we approach God ; we hardly take seriously the demand, no less rigorous, to purge our minds of error and stupidity. Men and women, and even popular divines, are described as being real saints but wonderfully silly and narrow-minded. This implies, of course, that to be like God is not inconsistent with being also both silly and narrow-minded. In fact, we fail to regard God as the Author of wisdom and knowledge as well as of goodness and love. It is possible that we may have to learn that ignorance is just as serious a sin as, let us say, dishonesty. It may, like dishonesty, be, in any given case, almost wholly due to circumstances exterior to the person who exhibits it, or it may be a sin for which he is verily guilty. We may argue that God is not really displeased with our ignorance, but with our desire to be ignorant, or our indifference to the attainment of knowledge. But this is equally true of sin : it is not the sinful act, but the deliberate doing of it, which we conceive to be specially displeasing to God. Knowledge, like the keeping of the Law, may be entirely without religious value, but its absence, if it be voluntarily acquiesced in, is culpable, just as immoral acts are culpable in like circumstances. In

this sense to be wise is as necessary in the approach to God as to be good. There is a real science, which demands wisdom, in the things of the Spirit as in the things of this world.

We may, then, take the manner of the scientist's approach to truth as affording us a real, if only an imperfect, analogy to that which we have called the "scientific" idea of prayer. If we apply this analogy to prayer, it would lead us to consider it not as a deprecation of the wrath of God, but as a determined effort to give entrance to God's light, which is endeavouring without ceasing to penetrate the darkness of our error. This is not anything new, nor is it absent from the religion of the Hebrews. It is found side by side with the Sultan's view. We find it in the Psalms, especially in that 119th Psalm which has been the constant companion of Catholic devotion. But still more clearly in the Wisdom literature do we find the confident approach to Wisdom substituted for the anxious deprecation of the God of Wrath.

The Book of Wisdom abounds in beautiful passages in praise of this new and higher outlook. "Wisdom is a spirit that loveth man." "God made not death, neither delighteth He when the living perish; for He createth all things that they might have being, and the generative powers of the world are healthsome, and there is no poison of destruction in them, but ungodly men by their hands and their words called death unto them." "Wisdom is radiant and fadeth not away, and easily is she beheld of them that love her, and found of them that seek her. She forestalleth them that desire to know her, making herself first known. She goeth about, herself seeking them that are worthy of her, and in their paths she appeareth unto them graciously, and in every purpose she meeteth them." "Wisdom is more mobile than any motion, yea, she pervadeth and penetrateth all things by reason of her pureness, for she is a breath of the power of God, and

a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty; therefore can nothing defiled find entrance into her. For she is an effulgence from everlasting light, and an unspotted mirror of the working of God, and an image of His goodness. And she, being one, hath power to do all things, and, remaining in herself, reneweth all things: and from generation to generation passing into holy souls, she maketh men friends of God and prophets. For nothing doth God love save him that dwelleth with wisdom."

In many beautiful passages of this kind we can note the nobler estimate of prayer—the confident but reverent converse of the seeker after Truth with the gracious, wise and unchanging Spirit that goes forward to meet her lovers and discloses to them her secrets of knowledge and right living. In spite of the apparent hostility of Nature to man's advances, the Hebrew philosophers were confident that Nature, when she is sought out and loved and honoured, is wholly beneficent to man.

When we pass to the New Testament we ask ourselves the all-important question, What is the teaching of Jesus concerning prayer? What is His attitude towards God? Did He approach as a suppliant to Jehovah of the thunderbolts, or did He approach as a student the source of wisdom? Neither of these figures wholly represents His attitude towards God; but who can doubt that He is nearer to the mind of the writers of Wisdom than to that of the writers of the Pentateuch or the imprecatory Psalms? Our Lord conceives of God as a Father having relation to a son who shares His nature and is capable of understanding His counsels, who does not fear to approach Him, nor does He deprecate His wrath. He is as confident that God is wholly on the side of health as that He is wholly on the side of holiness. He teaches us to pray in the same simple and confident tone in which the student approaches Nature, not with "vain repetitions," like

the heathen who think that they will be heard for their much speaking, but as certain that "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him," and as knowing also that the answer will come with unerring accuracy and intelligence—"for if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you your trespasses : but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses," *i.e.* you do not need to inform God of your needs, but you must indeed clearly understand that your attitude to life *is* your true "prayer," and the "answer" will, in the long run, be an exact reflex of your attitude towards God and man. Love will always bring love ; forgiveness will bring forgiveness ; hatred will bring hatred. Prayer is correspondence with, and understanding of, the purposes of God. The absolutely certain answer to such prayer is power over nature exactly proportionate to the measure of our understanding.

It is true that Jesus once and again compares prayer to God to the approach of a petitioner to a cruel or unwilling giver—as when He speaks of the suppliant widow and the unjust judge, who gives way only to the perpetual nuisance of her crying ; to the friend at midnight who will only leave his children who are in bed with him because of the battering of his door by his friend. These stories are sometimes held to justify the theory of anxious and grovelling supplication, as of the beggar in the street. Their language might at first sight seem to imply this ; but on reflection it surely becomes at once apparent that the argument is that if these most unpleasant characters will give way to unceasing pressure, it is much more certain that we shall, without any manner of doubt, find an abundant "answer" to our scientific understanding (which is indeed nothing else than confident faith in God who makes the sun to shine on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust), and

that therefore we need, in dealing with God, no such wiles as do those who deal with an unwilling giver. Christ's constant message is, "Have faith in God—in His will to overcome evil, to remove obstacles, to destroy sickness, to give holiness, to conquer death, to reveal instantaneously the Kingdom and make men partakers in it to-day if only they desire it enough."

Everything is open to those who believe enough and want with sufficient concentration of desire. There is no "baksheesh" necessary; no arbitrary sacrifices, no mystic passwords, no forms of introduction. There are no dragons in the way. God is not angry that He should be appeased, nor deaf that we should shout at Him, nor blind that He cannot perceive our needs. "People quote various words of the Lord (said Bishop Prince Lee to his old pupil, Dr. Westcott) as containing the sum of the Gospel—the Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, and the like; to me the essence of the Gospel is in simpler and shorter terms: *Μὴ φοβοῦ · μόνον πίστευε*.<sup>1</sup> Ah! Westcott, mark that *μόνον*. *Μὴ φοβοῦ · μόνον πίστευε*" (*Life of Bishop Westcott*, p. 249). Whatever your problem or your difficulty, there is a full, sufficient and intelligent answer; and it is the will of God that you should possess it as soon as you have established your claim to it by the intensity of your need, the boldness of your faith, and the careful accuracy of your knowledge of God's ways. That is the message of Christ as it is the message of physical science.

So when our Lord sees sin, He sees at once forgiveness; when He sees sickness, He sees at once healing; when He sees the destruction of Judaism, He sees at the same time the promise of the Kingdom; when He sees death, He sees resurrection. That is His life of faith; and the attitude of faith is in itself prayer.

We need not, indeed, be concerned to deny that those who came to our Lord with faith most crude,

<sup>1</sup> "Fear not; only believe."

most uncritical, but yet most urgent and unswerving, received benefits beyond all their hope. Let us not seek to deny it ; but in proportion as we approach our Lord's own example and teaching, we get the impression that He regarded prayer as a full, exact and scientific demonstration of the eternal Laws which proceed from the eternal Nature of God. To *know* Him is Eternal Life.

When we pass from our Lord Himself, and come to consider the teaching of His followers, we have to take into account the constant tendency, always discernible at every stage of religious development, to deflect opposition by compromising with the religious tendencies and prejudices of the day, and to translate unfamiliar and unpalatable ideas into the popular language of the moment. Can it be seriously doubted that we find this tendency in the Epistles ? The Jews were accustomed to the ideas of Mediator, Intercessor, Propitiation, Sacrifice, Temple, Altar. They could not readily conceive of any approach to God except by some one who should appease His wrath, should hide the sins of men, should offer a sacrifice or be himself the sacrifice<sup>1</sup> to appease the wrath of an angry and vindictive potentate.

It was perhaps necessary, it must certainly have been tempting, to translate the simple and profound teaching of Jesus into the terms of the offended sovereign demanding a victim, the victim willingly offering himself, the offering accepted, and the wrath of the king appeased. We cannot be surprised that there is so much Judaism in the Epistles ; the wonder is that there is not far more. Christian writings of a not long subsequent date are overloaded with such ideas. Angels showering down plagues and pestilences ; horses wading in blood ; strange beasts with horns and terrible eyes—all the imagery of fear is quick to return. Here, as in the Old Testament, we must not be surprised that there is so much of all

<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, an entirely true and Christian sense in which these ideas can be truly used and which gives them permanent value (see Essay on "The Eucharist," pp. 306 ff.).



this—so much meal and so little leaven; we must be content to be reconciled to much that is below the level of Christ for the sake of the inexpressibly precious remnant which is left. Here too we are content, and more than content, to buy the whole field for the sake of the treasure hid in it. But we are not going to say that the whole field is necessarily of equal value with the treasure. There are some elements in the Apostolic teaching, beside the regulation of women's attire and deportment, which are below the level of Christ's teaching and are not on the highest level of Apostolic inspiration; and there is not a little to remind us that in the matter of prayer there was a tendency to think in terms of the old method of approach to God by way of sacrifice and mediation, of deprecation and propitiation, of which we find few, if any, traces in the teaching of our Lord.<sup>1</sup> We can afford to allow all this and yet rejoice in the triumphant sense of victory and deliverance from fear and darkness which is so characteristic of the Apostolic writings. We must remember that St. Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews were the modernists of their day. They spoke in terms of the ecclesiastical language of their age, while they were continually teaching people to reinterpret the current language and even to transcend the ideas which the language expressed. Religious people of that day thought in terms of wrath and propitiation, of blood and expiation, of bullocks and goats. They tried to express the revolutionary thought of Christ in terms of a conservative religious theology. We are apt to conceive that the terms in which they expressed their teaching, which are entirely foreign and, indeed, almost incomprehensible to us who have never seen a bullock

<sup>1</sup> Yet there is much less of this than is often supposed. Dr. Westcott believed that there is no thought of 'propitiating God' in the New Testament. "Such language as 'propitiating God' and 'God being reconciled' are foreign to the language of the New Testament. Man is reconciled (2 Cor. v. 18 ff.; Rom. v. 10 f.). There is a 'propitiation' in the matter of the sin or of the sinner. The love of God is the same throughout."—Westcott, *Comment on Epistles of St. John*, p. 87.

or a goat in church, are as sacred and necessary to us as the ideas which these images, even in those days, very inadequately expressed. If these writers were teaching now, we can be tolerably sure that they would not speak in terms of bullocks, but in terms of the highest religious ideals of our own generation.

We are now in a position, perhaps, to ask ourselves what this idea of scientific prayer means to us Christians to-day. What is the practical change of attitude which it involves for those who have been educated in "Sultanic" prayer?

It means just that we are absolutely confident that God is all-powerful to do, all-wise to know, all-loving to give. He can do exceeding abundantly for us beyond all that we ask or think. We have no need to remind Him of His promises, to stir His memory, to appease His anger, or to employ mediators to assure His favourable response. We are conscious, indeed, that we cannot expect an "answer" to our needs unless we come in that same spirit of filial confidence which our Lord Himself had. We must come to Him as the true student comes to Nature, "as little children," willing to be born again so that old prejudices and preconceptions may be taken away, but yet in bold and confident assurance. We must come in our Lord's spirit; we must have His mind; we must "eat His flesh" and "drink His blood," that is, we must assimilate and make our own all His life, all His outlook, all His teaching; in a word, we must come "in His Name." In this sense, indeed, we may truly say, in Jewish language, that He is our Mediator; not a mediator needed because of God's unfriendly attitude, but on account of our estrangement and ignorance and moral obstinacy. The filial spirit, which is the very spirit of Jesus, which knows no fear, and knows itself to be Son of God because it is also Son of man, is the one mediator between God and man, and there is none other Name than this given unto men whereby we must be saved.

Jesus Christ is the eternal Mediator between God and man, not because He is the greatest man among many, but because He incarnates that ideal Manhood which is the perfect expression of true Godhead. He *is* God and Man, and through His Spirit He makes real to us the freedom of approach to God, the Divine nature of perfect Manhood, the possibility of an exact knowledge of the faith God requires, in order to produce for us tangible and demonstrable results. His Spirit, by which, as He foretold to us, He lives now in the world, is thus the one Mediator between God and man, as, in a lower sense, the artist is to us the mediator of natural beauty, and the scientist the mediator of natural law. He mediates to us those laws which without Him we should never have perceived. He mediates, too, to us the power to perceive them and to carry them out into practice.

So, praying "in His Name," we believe, we are certain, that an exact and wholly adequate answer to every need is always at hand. We have the same certitude that a scientist claims that for every problem there is a solution. However great the problem, it can be solved in accordance with eternal spiritual law. The world of phenomena is not rigid ; it is plastic to him who has the mind of Christ ; and no mountain of matter is so great that it cannot be moved, no sycamine tree so firmly rooted that it cannot be plucked up.

Once again, we shall believe that the "answer" to prayer will not arrive as a parcel is brought to our door, as something handed over to us from outside. The answer will come, as it comes to the scientist or the artist or the musician, by an enlightenment of the mind, which opens out to us the laws of the Kingdom of Heaven. We shall be given the inspiration, and we shall work out our own problem according to the law of our own measure of faith. Just as the modern doctor is less and less inclined merely to hand over a bottle of medicine to his patient and more and more sees that he must seek

to evoke in the patient the impetus of life which will enable him to co-operate with the law of life within,<sup>1</sup> so the spiritual student will expect that the healing of outward conditions will come by the revelation to his mind of the laws of natural release. Our prayers will thus tend to become less and less anxious cries for mercy, and petitions that God will change His attitude towards us, and will altogether cease to be prayers that He will take away His anger and not suffer His fierce displeasure to arise ; and in place of such faithless petitions we shall put forth strong and filial claims to understand, and co-operate with, the eternal and loving will of God in the face of each problem that confronts us. "True prayer," Bishop Westcott has said, "the prayer which must be answered, is the personal recognition of the Divine Will."<sup>2</sup> "The questioning of ignorance is to be replaced by the definite prayer which claims absolute accomplishment as being in conformity with the will of God."<sup>3</sup>

We know that it is God's will, and His pleasure, that we should make this confident claim.

There are many people who have been brought up in the Sultanic view of God who afterwards pass over in reaction to the view which regards God as an omnipresent and impersonal Power, always impartially and, as it were, automatically and inevitably making for love, wisdom, health and beauty, and certain to co-operate with any living soul that will lend its energies to this Divine force. This view is often seen to-day where we find God spoken of as "Science" or "Principle" or "Causation," with an apparent disregard (as it seems to some) of the common use of those terms, which renders this teaching very confusing to the uninitiated. In spite of this unwonted use of terms, these people have hold of an important aspect of truth. This is proved by the practical results of their faith.

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. C. Burlureaux, *Traité pratique de psychothérapie*.

<sup>2</sup> Commentary on Hebrews v. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Commentary on John xvi. 23.

There can be no doubt that many people have found in this changed conception of God a wonderful inspiration and peace. To them the idea of personality could never be separated from the idea of emotionalism, of changefulness, of contingency and mood. How could they ever tell whether God was really appeased, and whether, even if He were appeased to-day, His wrath might not break out afresh to-morrow? To people brought up in such an atmosphere the idea comes as new that, in worshipping God, we are really worshipping Goodness, Love, Life, Principle, and so on; it comes as a new strength and stay in life. To this newly discovered belief "Christian Science" and similar religious movements owe much of their influence and their power of regenerating character. Many people thus attain for the first time something of the calmness and balance of the man of science. They learn to believe that the results of co-operation with God's purpose are as certain and accurate as the demonstrations of the laboratory. They have been accustomed to worship God as though He were an individual man—of superhuman powers, it is true, but still, after all, an individual, with all the individual's liability to limitation, to waywardness, to forgetfulness and caprice. Even the most loving man may sometimes fail in love, but Love itself can never fall short of loving. The wisest ruler may sometimes grow slack, and his wisdom may fail to interpret itself to our moods, our folly may annoy or infuriate him, but Wisdom will never forget to be wise, and Goodness will never be impatient, and Life can never see death.

Thus the idea of God as the abstract, active principle of good does, as a matter of fact, bring to many in our own generation a new steadfastness in disappointment, and a confident assurance in the search after God which they did not possess before. Nor does it in practice end in an otiose quietism. Just as the belief in the uniformity of Nature is the basis of all experiment and

the bedrock of all confidence in scientific achievement, so this belief in God as the active principle of good has, as a matter of fact, led to bolder and more successful experiments in healing the sick, in conquering overwhelming sorrows, and overcoming long-standing habits of sin than perhaps have ever been attempted before in the history of the Church. Never have there been more men and women in the Church of Christ who look for sure results from co-operation with God in the actual transformation of physical conditions than to-day. And this confidence does not come from the expectation of miraculous intervention by the suspension of law, but by belief in the simple, accurate and certain demonstration of spiritual laws which actually and always exist, and are made immediately available by our faith and understanding.

The people who obtain these results would not say that they believe in a miraculous or supernatural Christianity, because they would probably feel, in using such a phrase, that they were allowing that the ultimate and true nature of the universe was something less than good; but in an experience which is supra-normal no one could believe more enthusiastically. No Christian of any age would feel more confident in the power of prayer to cast out devils, to heal the sick, to put an end to war, to banish the evils that beset society. They would say that these things are accomplished by intelligent and never-ceasing co-operation with God's laws; that their success depends quite as much upon the carrying out of accurate and immutable laws as the building of a bridge depends upon the laws of mathematics. They would say that no amount of beseeching, no rending of hearts or garments, will bring about the desire of the prayerful man apart from conformity to the spiritual laws that govern all beneficent action. Thus in the text-book of Christian Science (*Science and Health*) Mrs. Eddy says: "God is Love. Can we ask him

to be more? God is intelligence. Can we inform the infinite Mind of anything he does not already comprehend? Do we expect to change perfection? Shall we plead for more at the open fount, which is pouring forth more than we can accept? The unspoken desire does bring us nearer the source of all existence and blessedness. Asking God to *be* God is a vain repetition. God is 'the same yesterday, to-day and for ever,' and he who is immutably right will do right without being reminded of his province. The wisdom of man is not sufficient to warrant him in advising God. Who would stand before a blackboard and pray the principle of mathematics to solve the problem? The rule is already established and it is our task to work out the solution."

While this is a line of thought very characteristic of some modern religious movements, the insistence upon the being of God as "abstract principle" is not so new an idea as many uninstructed Christians might suppose. The insistence upon God's character as Eternal Wisdom which pervades the later literature of the Hebrews may well have been a happy reaction from the Sultanic view of Him as an all-powerful and often wrathful king. The Johannine teaching which attributes Eternity and Divinity to the Logos or Reason supplies just that element of fixity and immutability in the idea of God which the Christian Scientist finds in his thought of God as "Divine Science." The idea of salvation by *Γνωσις*, so characteristic of the Alexandrine school of Theology, presents again some analogies with the teaching of these modern cults.

To another class of minds this aspect of religion will seem always remote and cold. It appears to lack the joy of personal intercourse, to be a philosophy for the study rather than a religion for the clash and turmoil of life. Such people cry out for "the flesh in the Godhead, a hand like their hand." They would rather even have the Sultanic conception of a Divine

despot, with all his faults and whims, than the cold, austere "Principle" of the Neo-Platonist or the Christian Scientist. And indeed if this impersonal view of God caused men to forget that Goodness, Wisdom and Love can only inhere and be manifested in Personality, or something which is more and not less than Personality, it is clearly a view as dangerous as it is untrue to our knowledge of life. The idea of Personality, if rightly understood, by no means runs counter to the ideas of steadfastness, unity and law. The fickleness and waywardness of individuals is due, not to the possession of personality, but to the lack of it.

Christianity, however, has within it the necessary correction to the one-sidedness of this, as also of the Sultanic view of God. Christ's vision of God as the Father enters as the reconciliation of these two types of religious experience. The Father is a person; He knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but dust; He numbers the hairs of our head, and cares for each sparrow that falls. Yet the Father is the antithesis of the capricious tyrant. He is to the son the symbol of steadfastness and beneficent law; He shares the nature of His children; their interests are one with His, and He rules by co-operation, not by fear. He, less than any one else, needs information as to His son's needs. He anticipates them because He knows them so well. He will be stern, if need be, when strangers might be slack. The more intimate the relation between the two, the less there is of conscious petition; the son has learnt to know that each petition, as it comes to be really and urgently felt, is promptly met by His Father, and that its supply is immediately at hand.

If the filial soul does not in words ask for the things he needs, it is not because his relation with God is less than personal, but because it is so intimate that he knows that the demand in his own heart, the source



of the supply, and the gift itself are all one in their origin. They are all of God and from God. He does not imagine for a moment that it is his business to acquiesce idly in whatever state he finds himself and to wait until it is altered from outside. All his desires for betterment are of God ; he sets no limit whatever to the change which his God-given faith can bring about in the universe ; his prayer is not an effort to alter God's will, but to unbar the doors and unstop the channels of his own nature so as to admit the urgent stream of Divine and eternal beneficence.

So we attack the problems of war, of disease, of social distress, not as asking God to put aside His fierce wrath and have pity upon those whom hitherto He has not pitied, but as being sure that the understanding and working out of eternal, spiritual laws by us is possible and practicable. We believe that spiritual resistance in the face of injustice or disease is the highest, the most radical, the most practicable form of resistance. It has the most assured results. The Church to-day is almost more timid and hesitant in believing this than the men of science who reject or ignore "religion." We are afraid to use the powers of the spirit to check an illness, to reform a drunkard or to redress a great wrong. We are more at home with drugs, with explosive shells, with the methods of the police court. These methods seem to us more sure and drastic and successful ; methods which depend wholly upon Love seem doubtful and sentimental. We apologise for them, and those who use them are under suspicion. Yet those who have experience of them are gaining more and more certainty that they alone are the weapons of precision. Our criminals are more surely saved to society, the sick are more surely cured, when spiritual laws are believed and acted upon, than when they are distrusted or ignored.

The main hindrance to prayer is the sense of un-

certainty which lingers in the minds of most people as to whether any particular prayer will, or will not, have any result whatever. It is comparatively easy in the study to form theories and give instructions which are supposed by the man in the study to overcome and neutralise this sense of uncertainty ; but as long as God is conceived of as the author of misery and wrath, of pestilence and war, as well as of happiness and grace, and as long as His purposes are regarded as quite inscrutable, this sense of uncertainty will continue to destroy the faith of the multitude. The Gospel promises to faith stand out in startling and marvellous contrast to the teaching that breeds this uncertainty.

A little devotional manual, very widely used, which is full of real piety, affords us a good example of this attitude of fearful uncertainty as to God's loving attitude towards us. "You see in what a terrible condemnation sin has involved you ! It has brought you under the Wrath of God. O words of awful meaning ! O terrible reality, for a soul to find itself under the Wrath of God ! For think what it means—what it involves, even this, that if the soul leaves the body, that is, dies in this state, it will be driven away from God, and be plunged into a place of darkness and misery for ever. . . . Can a person thus convicted of sin—who feels this curse always hanging over him, and ready to fall upon him, without perhaps any warning—can such a person feel happy ? No, he cannot." The penitent is taught to repeat as his own the language of the Old Testament, and to say of God, "He lieth in wait for me as a leopard. He runneth upon me as a giant. I cry unto Him, but He heareth not." <sup>1</sup>

Does not such language show us the need for a reformation in the teaching of the Church ? We must cease to attribute to God those qualities which Christ

<sup>1</sup> *Pardon through the Precious Blood, or The Benefit of Absolution and how to obtain it.*

consistently attributed to the Devil. We shall also find that we have to revise our idea of omnipotence as applied to God. We have hitherto felt that at all costs we must predicate of God an omnipotence which made Him responsible for every event that occurred and every phenomenon which presented itself on the surface of the globe, whether it seemed to us good or bad.<sup>1</sup> If a child died in a slum, or a drunkard fell into the river and was drowned, if a horrible war broke out which swept away its millions of men, or pestilence and famine devastated an empire, at all costs men have thought God's character for omnipotence must be asserted, and we must say that those calamities are God's will and seek to find for them some rational justification. So far has this been carried that the phrase "Thy will be done" has been generally applied as our answer to every enormity which legislatures and scientists are painfully and laboriously endeavouring to counteract and overcome, and which all moralists are denouncing. While scientists and social reformers have been diligently and with great zest combating quite preventable evils, the religionist, in the interests of God's character for omnipotence, has been blindly repeating—

Let me be still and murmur not,  
But breathe the prayer Divinely taught,  
"Thy will be done."

Yet this prayer, "Divinely taught," was, as a matter of fact, the prelude, not to acquiescence in things remaining as they were, on the theory that whatever is is God's will, but to an uniquely vigorous and triumphant onslaught upon things as they were in the interest of things as they were intended to be. The Christian Gospel does not by any means teach us the doctrine that all which is is good, but even goes to the length of risking an extreme appearance of dualism in its effort to make plain to us that the doctrine of omnipotence is not to be taken as teaching that everything

<sup>1</sup> But St. Augustine says, "*Quaedam non potest, quia omnipotens est.*"

which happens is agreeable to the will of God. Christ might seem to have gone to an extreme length in endowing the Jewish belief in Satan with new vitality by His earnest insistence upon the dissociation of the idea of God from all responsibility for cruelty, disease and sin. We shall have to learn that it were better, if need be, to revise our idea of omnipotence than to weaken our hold upon God as Love and Righteousness and Freedom. Let us hold to God as Love, as the enemy of all that is not Love, even if provisionally we feel it to be difficult to reconcile this view with our belief in Omnipotence. If we so do, we shall, in the long run, find that it gives us a less mechanical and infinitely more moral idea of the meaning of Omnipotence—the Omnipotence which can make, not mechanical automata, but spirits which choose good because they could also choose evil. This revised belief in Omnipotence will immensely enlarge the scope of prayer, because we shall plunge boldly into the achievement of destroying many things which are now firmly planted in the world through the mistaken belief of Christians that they are the works of God, and we shall be encouraged to bring into being much which is now only dimly shadowed forth and hoped for, undeterred by the chilling fear that we may perchance be fighting against God.

We must allow that the devotional literature of the Church has not wholly cleansed itself from these pagan ideas. It is not necessary to enlarge upon this very real difficulty, but the language which makes the Communion Service or the Prayer against plague now almost wholly impossible to use,<sup>1</sup> makes some

<sup>1</sup> "O Almighty God, who in thy wrath didst send a plague upon thine own people in the wilderness, for their obstinate rebellion against Moses and Aaron : and also, in the time of King David, didst slay with the plague of Pestilence three score and ten thousand, and yet remembering thy mercy didst save the rest ; have pity upon us miserable sinners, who now are visited with great sickness and mortality ; that like as thou didst then accept of an atonement, and didst command the destroying Angel to cease from punishing, so it may now please thee to withdraw from us this plague and grievous sickness ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." (It is only fair to add that, though this prayer is officially authorised for use in the Anglican Church, it is seldom, if ever, used in modern times.)

phrases and forms in other parts of the Prayer Book not wholly easy to reconcile with the filial approach to God, and the certainty of His will to hear us, and the sure knowledge that He is Love—that certainty which casts out all fear and removes all desire to be spared from punishment. This new attitude must in time find its reflection in a revision of the public worship of the Church.

Prayer in the future will surely lose wholly its element of deprecation ; it will, perhaps, lose in part its form of petition ; it will tend to increase its element of affirmation. Acts of faith and hope, of love and penitence, will find a larger place. Greater stress will be laid upon the element of adoration, the quiet contemplation of God's nature and purpose, the corporate silence in which God says much, while we listen much and speak not at all, the cleansing of the avenues of the mind through which understanding comes to us as we live in conscious fellowship with Divine purposes. Petition may perhaps become less frequent, not because our needs become less urgent, nor yet because we hold to any mechanical "Law" of God which makes us think that the course of this world is fixed and unalterable, but because we shall realise more and more that the answer to our petitions lies, not in any change in God, but in our own greater measure of understanding. If this should be so, we need not be disappointed or alarmed.

"The soul should not be surprised," says Madame Guyon, "at feeling itself unable to offer up to God such petitions as it had formerly made with freedom and facility, for now the Spirit maketh intercession for it according to the will of God. We must co-operate with, and second, the designs of God, which tend to divest us of all our own operations, that in the place thereof His own may be substituted."

The Christian suppliant, conscious both of God's entire willingness to grant, and of his own right as a son

to claim, all that is necessary both for his own and the world's fullest and highest satisfaction, will yet continue, with all simplicity, to "make his requests known unto God." Many of these requests may be very crude and undeveloped : many will cease, as spiritual progress is made, to be offered at all, because they will be seen to be out of harmony with Divine purposes, but yet it is essentially right and expedient that every desire, however simple and foolish, should be laid before the presence of the Divine Love. Only, the result—the happiest result—of this will often be that such desires will be wholly laid aside, as they are answered by an increasing understanding that their attainment is inconsistent, alike with the fulfilment of the suppliant's own good and the Father's Divine purposes. But the petition has not been wasted ; it has done its work. The element of petition will then, in all probability, so long as we are on this earthly plane, never be wholly laid aside, but we shall, in making our prayer, lay ever greater stress upon that which is now felt to be the preparatory stage of prayer : the placing of our spirit in harmony with God's purpose ; the contemplation of that purpose ; the desire that that purpose may be revealed to us, so that we may see it with the steady gaze with which the scientific student contemplates a great law of Nature, with the clearness with which an artist sees the vision of Beauty, so that it may become a fixed principle governing our own future desires and thoughts. If we so act, it is certain that much prayer which now takes the form of petition that God will intervene to change the course of this world will take for the future the form of a steady and intense realisation that God's purposes of Love are unchangeably good and need no alteration, and that it rests with us, with minds cleansed from error, and hearts attuned to nobler desires, to go forth and do the will of God. We shall stop beseeching God to cast out devils, and go forth in His Name and cast them out ourselves.

This will be not the abandonment of Prayer, but its consummation.

It will, indeed, be no mere quietism which will take the place of petition ; but even the insistent and agonising hunger and thirst for righteousness, for peace among nations, for the coming of the Kingdom, will turn itself into an intense faith in God's willingness to give us all, and more than all, we ask ; and we shall turn in loving faith to Him who surely says to us, "Thy faith shall make thee whole," "Ye are not straitened in God ; ye are straitened in your own affections." We know that He is willing to give ; we have no need to ask ; we need only to have the heart conscious of a dire emptiness, the mind ready to receive, untiring in the search for Divine wisdom, quick to understand the answer which will be given, the will to co-operate with the purposes of God.

This, surely, is the prayer of understanding, the prayer of reasonableness, the prayer of Christlike faith. Such prayer will never become antiquated by the advance of knowledge, and will never cease to arise to Heaven until the Kingdom of God shall come.

IV

PRAYER AND THE MYSTIC VISION

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# SYNOPSIS

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## IV

### PRAYER AND THE MYSTIC VISION

#### I

THE great central realities and practices of religion are all so rich and complex, so bottomless in their depth, that no individual account, based upon personal experience and temperament, can do more than emphasise selected aspects of the particular many-sided reality or practice under consideration. Then, too, all definition, of necessity, means limitation, and more than that, all attempt at definition instantly reveals the lines and tendencies in the character of the person proposing the definition. The true reality all the time immensely overflows the barriers and limits set by the partiality of the definer.

This is particularly true of all realities of an inward and spiritual sort, realities, that is to say, which cannot be dealt with in terms of space and mathematics. The definition of a *wedge* in mechanics can be made exact, rigid and final. The variations in definition here are negligible. But when we pass over to the realm of the interior life, with its infinite attitudes and aspirations, the personal equation cannot be ignored. No one can tell us what constitutes the *essentia* of prayer, or what mystic vision really is, without discovering at the same time to us on what level of life he lives and what formative preferences are controlling his mind; and whatever he may say, we shall know that there is still

something more and different to be said. I am therefore making no claim in this article to cover the whole range and significance of prayer. I am merely calling attention to what seems to me the heart and central core of this great spiritual function, and I willingly grant that I am touching only one aspect of one of man's richest human privileges.

My studies of mysticism have gradually led me to the view that religion is essentially and at bottom a mystical act, a direct way of vital intercourse between man and God. Religion is thus in its essential features as genuinely a matter of *experience* as is our relationship with an external world. This interior experience of relationship with invisible reality is what I mean by "mystic vision." The experience of mystic vision is one in which life appears at its highest level of inner unity and integral wholeness. All the deep-lying powers of the inward self, usually so divergent and conflicting—the foreground purposes defeated by background inhibitions and by marginal doubts—become liberated and unified into one conscious life, which is not merely intellectual, nor merely volitional, nor solely emotional, but an undivided whole of experience. With the inner unification is joined furthermore a sense of a flooding, invading Life and Energy from beyond—what William Watson calls

The bubbling of the springs  
That feed the world.

The usual insulations of the narrow individual life seem broken through and the recipient feels as though actual contact were attained with an enfolding Presence, life-giving, joy-bringing, light-supplying.

There is something in the structure of the soul, in the nature of personal self-consciousness, which prepares the way for mystic vision and which fits us for the type of experience above described. We are framed and made for intercourse with a supersensuous

world and we cannot live within the limits of the tangible and describable world. Everyday life is over-rational and over-practical. We arrive at some of our most important certainties and we come upon some of our most imperative compulsions often with a minimum of dialectic. There are regions in us which underlie our cleverest logic, our clearest thinking, our most accurate calculating. Our memories and our imaginations spring to birth out of a deeper innermost life in which all so-called "states" of consciousness are embedded, and deep lies under deep. Heraclitus was right when he said, "You cannot find the boundaries of the soul by travelling in any direction." There is something in us which demands *correspondence* with another environment than that from which we draw our physical supplies. Eternity has in some sort been set in our nature and we can no more shut the infinite out of our being than the inlet can shut out the tides of the sea. Maeterlinck has well declared that "there is in us, above the reasoning portion of our reason, a whole region answering to something different, which is preparing for the surprises of the future, and which goes on ahead of our imperfect attainments and enables us to live on a level very much superior to that of those attainments."<sup>1</sup>

Still more clearly in his impressive essay on *The Energies of Men*, Professor William James has shown how men "habitually use only a small part of the powers which they actually possess and which they might use under appropriate conditions," and he has indicated in this essay many ways by which the hidden reservoirs of power within reach may be tapped and the energy released and turned into working power.

Jacob Boehme's account of the way in which his hampered spirit "broke through the gate" and came out into a wider inward world of life and light and

<sup>1</sup> Maeterlinck's motto, which he adopted from an ancient mantelpiece in Bruges, is: "Yet more is to be found in me."

power is one of the best accounts available, but something like the great Teutonic mystic's experience has come to most of us. "While I was in affliction and trouble, I elevated my spirit, and earnestly raised it up unto God, as with a great stress and onset, lifting up my whole heart and mind and will and resolution to wrestle with the love and mercy of God and not to give over unless He blessed me—then the Spirit did break through. When in my resolved zeal I made such an assault, storm, and onset upon God, as if I had more reserves of virtue and power ready, with a resolution to hazard my life upon it, suddenly my spirit did break through the Gate, not without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and I reached to the innermost Birth of the Deity and there I was embraced with love as a bridegroom embraces his bride. My triumphing can be compared to nothing but the experience in which life is generated in the midst of death or like the resurrection from the dead. In this Light my spirit suddenly saw through all, and in all created things, even in herbs and grass, I knew God—who He is, how He is, and what His will is—and suddenly in that Light my will was set upon by a mighty impulse to describe the being of God."<sup>1</sup>

It is, I maintain, the experience not only of rare and unusual personalities that a larger Life impinges upon the margins of the inner realm, but most normal persons have at least moments when

A bolt is shot back somewhere in the breast,

and they find themselves possessed of unsuspected energies, flooded with added life, as though a new compartment of being or a new dimension of space were opened, and they are inwardly convinced beyond all doubt that they have been in correspondence with a real though invisible world of Spirit and Life.

It has, I know, been pointed out that there is a

<sup>1</sup> *The Aurora*, xix. 10-13.

similarity between these experiences of mystic vision, these moments of inward "flooding," and the varied phenomena of "auto-suggestion," and we are reminded that all this discovery of new dimensions and this joyous correspondence with a divine Companion may be only an illusory, solitary, one-sided, subjective experience, produced by the well-known dynamic effect of "live" vivid expectation. It is true that mystics have sometimes exhibited phenomena of hysteria and that they have sometimes made use of methods of suggestion which are indistinguishable from those which appear in the familiar phenomena of hypnosis. It may even be granted that there is no absolute proof that these mystic experiences, inwardly so saturated with the conviction of contact with something beyond the *me*, are what they *seem* to be. It is notoriously difficult to find coercive ontological proof in any field. There is no infallible mark or brand upon these experiences which puts them in a class all by themselves and which divides them by a great gulf from all that can be called "auto-suggestion." But "auto-suggestion" is only a learned phrase which explains nothing. It merely means that some experiences which seem self-transcending are in reality not so. In the last resort we must fall back in this particular strait upon pragmatic tests and verifications. "Auto-suggestions" which end in abortive fears and which shut the subject up to the vain and debilitating chase of his own illusory seemings are on their face abnormal and unhealthy states. They reveal no constructive, or survival, value. They assist the subject, furthermore, in no way to get into more genuine co-operative relationship with his fellows. On the contrary, they tend to isolate him and to sever his connections with every kind of environment. There are experiences of mystic vision, on the other hand, the type we are now discussing, which work transforming and permanent life-effects and which appear to bring verifying evidences that extra-human

forces have been discovered. Such experiences minister to life, construct personality, equip for a mission, fuse men into more dynamic groups, conduce to the increased power of the race. Energy to live by has actually come to these persons from somewhere. We have here a kind of experience which the universe backs and confirms. It is, then, at least a worthy venture of faith to trust this inner vision by which men have lived and by which many are still living.

Émile Boutroux has supplied us with a happy phrase for the heart's inner testimony to this junction of finite and infinite within us, a junction to which philosophers as well as mystics bear witness. He names it "the Beyond that is within"—a genuine Beyond, he calls it, a greater and more perfect Being than himself with which man comes in touch on the inner side of his nature.<sup>1</sup> "Religion," he concludes, "pledges, in the innermost depths of the soul, the fundamental unity of the Given and of the Beyond."<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, the keenest psychological observer of the ancients, had already in his day discovered that there is a Beyond within which he calls "the abyss of consciousness," where with ineffable joy the soul can come upon *That which Is*.

Whenever we get back to the fundamental experience of mystic vision and catch the soul's first-hand testimony, we get evidence that the human spirit transcends itself and is environed by a spiritual world with which it holds commerce and vital relationship. The constructive mystics, not only of the Christian communions but also those of other religions, have explored higher levels of life than those on which men usually live, and they have given impressive demonstration through the heightened dynamic quality of their lives and service that they have been drawing upon and utilising unusual reservoirs of vital energy. They have revealed a peculiar aptitude

<sup>1</sup> Émile Boutroux, *The Beyond that is Within* (1912), pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 25.

for correspondence with the Beyond that is within, and they have exhibited a genius for living by their inner conviction of God. They are striking examples of real mystical *experience*.

On the other hand, what is styled "Mysticism," as it has appeared in the long history of Christian thought, involves an intellectual formulation and has of necessity been affected by the prevailing metaphysical conceptions. There are always two strands to be found in all Mysticism. There is first the strand of intimate personal experience which, like the web-thread of the spider, is made out of the very substance of the inner life itself, and, secondly, there is a dialectical, metaphysical strand which partakes of the intellectual climate of the age, the mental environment which many thinkers, living and dead, have toiled to produce, and through which the mystic endeavours to express what his soul has felt. This second strand or aspect is, however, something more than "intellectual formulation." It includes as well the prevailing ideals, aspirations and sentiments which have become the unconscious inner habits of the time, for no one can escape the group-tendencies in which he lives. If piety culminates in asceticism in one's period, and if sainthood in one's time is characteristically attached to renunciation, those traits will almost certainly be an indissoluble part of the spiritual fibre of one's mysticism. Both the intellectual formulations and the emotional and motor habits under which the pattern mystics of history lived, strongly favoured the formation of a negative cast in thought and action.

God, according to the metaphysical conception which underlies the main line of historical mysticism, is absolute Reality, that which Is, Pure Being. In order to maintain the absoluteness of God, it seemed necessary to insist on His immutability and His oneness, as opposed to all mutability, duality or plurality or otherness. To find Him, therefore, the face of the seeker must be sternly turned away from all finite things, all transitory



happenings, all passing states of mind, all that is *here* or *now*, all that can be seen or felt or known or named. The Absolute, by processes of elimination, seemed best conceived as "a nameless Nothing," "an undifferentiated One," "an abysmal Dark," "the silent desert of the Godhead where no one is at home." All Christian Mysticism that came from Neoplatonic influences is a quest for a God who is everything which finite things are not, and is consequently committed to a *via negativa* as the only way up to Him. This *negative way* is taken by many interpreters to be the real *differentia* of Mysticism, and the whole mystical process is thus thought of as the pilgrimage of "the alone to the Alone."

But this abstract and negative cast is by no means confined to Mysticism. It is involved as well in much of the non-mystical piety which ran parallel with the course of mysticism, and it is likewise profoundly in evidence in all the metaphysical thinking of the same period. Mysticism took the negative way because, for the fearless and venturesome seeker who was determined to cut all cables and swing clear out to sea with God, there was no other way yet found from the finite to the Infinite. It has taken all the philosophical and spiritual travail of the centuries to think through the idea of a concrete Infinite, interrelated with us and with the world, and to discover that the way to share in His immanent and comprehending Life is as much a way of affirmation as of negation. Mysticism will not be revived and become a powerful present-day force until it is liberated from dependence on outworn and inadequate forms, and until it conquers for itself more congenial thought-terms through which in a vital way it can translate its human experience and its vision of God.

There is a growing tendency abroad now to define Mysticism as a way of life, the emergence of a higher life-type and a higher way of corresponding with the spiritual environment of the soul; and this is a move-

ment in the right direction. But unfortunately much of the work of present-day interpretation carries on consciously or unconsciously the abstract, dialectic and negative features which doom Mysticism to remain an affair of books. We can learn very much from the experience of the great mystics, but we must not come under the spell of the outworn thought-forms and motor-habits through which they endeavoured to utter themselves. The well-marked, sharply defined "mystic way" which many mystics of the past have taken is esoteric and more or less artificial, not grounded in the inherent nature of the soul and not a universal highway for the whole race of the saved, though even here the experience of mystics, as a typical pilgrim's progress, may be and often is illuminating. The "ladders" of mystical ascent must be treated as parables of the way upward rather than as literal rungs and necessary stages of religious experience, and one feels how artificial they are when an attempt is made to fit the mighty life-experiences of Christ and of St. Paul and of the author of the Fourth Gospel into these mystical model-forms and to make *them* follow the "purgative," the "illuminative" and the "unitive" stages.

The modern studies in this field have, I think, convincingly shown that Mysticism cannot safely be mapped off and isolated as a special and peculiar "way" either of knowledge or of life. Both life and knowledge are far too rich and inclusive to be reduced to one elemental aspect of experience. There can be no doubt, to those who have been there, that there do come moments of mystical opening, fresh bubblings of the stream of life, swift insights, the inrush of new energies, when the soul feels an irresistible surge of certainty. But it is as impossible to live by inarticulate experience alone as it would be to live physically on ozone alone. The actual *content* of religious faith, the definite beliefs which give us marching direction, the concrete ideas which furnish body and filling to our religion, the whole structure of our

thought of God and of the world and of men and of duty and of eternal destiny, are the slow accretions of racial experience and do not come to us by the secret door of mystical openings. In so far as mystics receive definite "openings," with concrete content, they are likely to be the product of group-influence. They are gestated by the literature on which the mystic has fed himself, or they are suggested by the social environment in which he is saturated, or they have subconsciously ripened within under the maturing guidance of expectation. The ideas, the illustrations, the phrases, and the words of the master mystics appear and reappear, disguised or undisguised, in the accounts of the experiences of hundreds of succeeding mystics, as the artistic devices of great masters of painting reappear in the works that follow them. It is always possible to show that the content of the mystic's insights has a history, as our ideals of right and wrong have and as our ideals in art and literature have. The most positive contribution of the mystic to the world is his own personal life, heightened and dynamised by his inner experience. What he brings to us in terms of interpretation is always heavily laden with the immemorial gains of the spiritual travails of men behind him.

But the mystical experience itself as it bursts upon the soul is, as I have said, a unifying, fusing, intensifying, inward event. It may not bring new facts, it may open no door to oracular communications, it may not be a gratuitous largess of knowledge; but it enables a soul to *see* what it knows, to seize by a sudden insight the long results of slow-footed experience, to re-value and select what is morally and spiritually highest in the immemorial gains of the race, to get possession of regions of the self which are ordinarily beyond its hail, to fuse its truth with the heat of conviction and to flood its elemental beliefs with a new depth of feeling. This dynamic inward event is not dependent upon any peculiar stock of ideas and is not

confined to what is usually called the purview of religion ; it is the sudden transcendence of our usual fragmentary island of reality and the momentary discovery of the *whole* to which we belong. We can best help our age toward a real revival of Mysticism as an elemental aspect of religious life, not by formulating an esoteric "mystic way," not by clinging to the ancient metaphysic to which Mysticism has been allied, but by emphasising the reality of mystical experience, by insisting on its healthy and normal character, and by indicating ways in which such dynamic experiences can be fostered, and realised, and put into practical application.

## II

I shall now identify mystic vision and the central act of prayer. I have said that there is something in the fundamental ground of our nature which makes us religious beings, and I have called this primary spring of religion mystic vision, by which I mean an inner, immediate consciousness of relationship and intercourse with God as the spiritual environment of the soul. This "divine mutual and reciprocal correspondence," to use the great phrase of Clement of Alexandria, is, furthermore, I believe, the elemental basis and ground of prayer.

We have not to do with a God who is "off there" above the sky, who can deal with us only through "the violation of physical law." We have instead a God "in whom we live and move and are," whose Being opens into ours, and ours into His, who is the very Life of our lives, the matrix of our personality ; and there is no separation between us unless we make it ourselves. No man, scientist or layman, knows where the curve is to be drawn about the personal "self." No man can say with authority that the circulation of Divine currents into the soul's inward life is impossible. On the contrary, Energy does come

in. In our highest moments we find ourselves in contact with wider spiritual Life than belongs to our normal *me*.

But true prayer is something higher. It is immediate spiritual fellowship. Even if science could demonstrate that prayer could never effect any kind of utilitarian results, still prayer on its loftier side would remain untouched, and persons of spiritual reach would go on praying as before. If we could say nothing more we could at least affirm that prayer, like faith, is itself the victory. The seeking is the finding. The wrestling is the blessing. It is no more a means to something else than love is. It is an end in itself. It is its own excuse for being. It is a kind of first fruit of the mystical nature of personality. The edge of the self is always touching a circle of life beyond itself to which it responds. The human heart is sensitive to God as the retina is to light waves. The soul possesses a native yearning for intercourse and companionship which takes it to God as naturally as the homing instinct of the pigeon takes it to the place of its birth. There is in every normal soul a spontaneous outreach, a free play of spirit, which gives it onward yearning of unstilled desire. It is no mere subjective instinct—no blind outreach. If it met no response, no answer, it would soon be weeded out of the race. It would shrivel like the functionless organ. We could not long continue to pray in faith if we lost the assurance that there is a Person who cares, and who actually corresponds with us. Prayer has stood the test of experience. In fact the very desire to pray is in itself prophetic of a heavenly Friend. A subjective need carries at any rate an implication that there is an objective stimulus which has provoked the need. There is no hunger for anything not tasted, as John Fiske in his little book, *Through Nature to God*, has well shown; there is no search for anything which is not in the environment, for the environment has always produced

the appetite. Then, may not this native need of the soul have risen out of the divine origin of the soul? It would at least seem that it has steadily verified itself as a safe guide to reality.

What is at first a vague life-activity and spontaneous outreach of inward energy—a feeling after companionship—remains in many persons vague to the end. But in others it frequently rises to a definite consciousness of a personal Presence, and there comes back into the soul a compelling evidence of a real Other Self who meets all the soul's need. For such persons prayer is the way to fulness of life. It is as natural as breathing. It is as normal an operation as appreciation of beauty, or the pursuit of truth. The soul is made that way, and as long as men are made with mystical deeps within, unsatisfied with the finite and incomplete, they will pray and be refreshed.

Professor William James in a famous passage of his *Psychology* has set forth what he believed to be the fundamental spring of prayer. He says :<sup>1</sup>

We hear in these days of scientific enlightenment a great deal of discussion about the efficacy of prayer; and many reasons are given us why we should not pray. But in all this very little is said of the reason why we *do* pray, which is simply that we cannot help praying. It seems probable that, in spite of all that "science" may do to the contrary, men will continue to pray to the end of time, unless their mental nature changes in a manner which nothing we know should lead us to expect. The impulse to pray is a necessary consequence of the fact that whilst the innermost of the empirical selves of a man is a Self of the *social* sort, it yet can find its only adequate *Socius* (its "great Companion") in an ideal world. . . . Most men, either continually or occasionally, carry a reference to it in their breasts. The humblest outcast on this earth can feel himself to be real and valid by means of this higher recognition. And, on the other hand, for most of us, a world with no such inner refuge when the outer social self failed and dropped from us would be the abyss of horror. I say "for most of us," because

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 316.

it is probable that men differ a good deal in the degree in which they are haunted by this sense of an ideal Spectator. It is a much more essential part of the consciousness of some men than of others. Those who have the most of it are possibly the most *religious* men. But I am sure that even those who say they are altogether without it, deceive themselves, and really have it in some degree.

In later years Professor James found the impulse to pray, not alone in the idealising tendency of the human spirit, *i.e.* not in the *need* of an ideal Spectator, but rather in the experience of direct transaction between the soul and God—"The consciousness which individuals have of an intercourse between themselves and higher powers with which they feel themselves to be related."<sup>1</sup> This "intercourse," he further declares, is felt to be "both active and mutual," "a give and take relation," "a sense that *something is transacting*," and he derives the experience from "*the fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come.*"<sup>2</sup>

Auguste Sabatier in like manner finds the ground of religion in what he calls "an intercourse, a conscious and voluntary relation" between the finite spirit and the mysterious power upon which it feels itself to depend, and prayer, he believes, has its root and spring in this inner intercourse—"this vital act." "Prayer," he concludes, "is religion in act; that is, prayer is real religion. It is prayer which distinguishes religious phenomena from all those which resemble them or lie near to them, from the moral sense, for instance, or from the aesthetic feeling. If religion is a practical need, the response to it can only be a practical action. No theory would suffice. Religion is nothing if it is not the vital act by which the whole spirit seeks to save itself by attaching itself to its principle. This act is prayer, by which I mean, not an empty utterance of

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 465.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 515.

words, not the repetition of certain sacred formulas, but the movement of the soul putting itself into personal relation and contact with the mysterious power whose presence it feels even before it is able to give it a name. Where this inward prayer is wanting there is no religion ; on the other hand, wherever this prayer springs up in the soul and moves it, even in the absence of all form and doctrine clearly defined, there is true religion, living piety.”<sup>1</sup>

Baron Von Hügel is as emphatic as was the great French theologian just quoted upon this central act of intercourse. He says : “ Religion is essentially social *vertically*—indeed here is its deepest root. It is unchangeably . . . an intercourse with God ; and though the soul cannot abidingly abstract itself from its fellows, it can and ought frequently to *recollect itself in a simple sense of God's presence*. Such moments of preoccupation with God alone bring a deep refreshment and simplification to the soul.”<sup>2</sup>

St. Teresa, speaking from great experience of interior communion, makes practice of the presence of God or the presence of Christ the important act of prayer. She declares in words freighted with experience : “ God, in His great mercy, will have the soul comprehend that His Majesty is so near to it that it need not send a messenger to Him, but may speak to Him itself, and not with a loud crying, because so near is He already, that He understands even the movements of its lips.”

Professor Pratt's empirical study of prayer, based upon a large number of answers to his *questionnaire*, comes to the same conclusion, that prayer is at bottom “intercourse,” “interchange,” “immediate social relationship with God”—“prayer opens a door into a larger life, a source of strength, not further to be described.”<sup>3</sup> F. O. Beck in his *Study of Prayer* declares that nearly 70 per cent of his correspondents state that

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>2</sup> *Eternal Life*, pp. 395-396.

<sup>3</sup> James Bissett Pratt, *The Psychology of Religious Belief*, pp. 271-279.



they feel the presence of a higher power while in the act of praying.<sup>1</sup>

I have perhaps spoken of mystic vision—the experience of intercourse—as though it were an experience which just “comes,” like a wind blowing where it lists, man knows not how ; but that is far from the truth. When it “comes” it is to a soul prepared for it and expecting it, as Jacob Boehme’s account of his strong onset to break through the gate indicates. There are of course mystics who can be cited to bear testimony in favour of passivity and who will declare that the way to spiritual plenitude is a way of quietistic repose and the suppression of all individual desire and effort—“God comes in when man goes out.” But sound convincing testimony, both from mystics and from psychologists, runs the other way. If the central act of prayer and mystic vision is intercourse and social communion, then the true preparation for it will not be loss or annihilation of personal selfhood but rather the heightening and intensifying of everything which constitutes the inner citadel of personality. Fellowship, it is true, cannot flourish where selfishness or self-seeking dominates, but on the other hand all great fellowship demands the co-operation of rich, active, dynamic personality. To receive great human love one must bring a great human spirit to the fellowship. It is true also of communion with God, which is both a divine grace and a human *act*. To enter the holy of holies and to commune with the great Companion one must *want* to enter and one must *expect* to commune.

Are there not  
Two points in the adventure of the diver,  
One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge,  
One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl ?

There must be in the spiritual adventure of the soul the decision to *plunge*, or to change the imperfect

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Religious Psychology and Pedagogy* for March 1906, p. 118.

figure, the resolution, as Boehme puts it, to lift the whole heart and mind and will and raise it to God. If one is to have the experience of incoming divine tides, the consummate beatitude of communion, one must seek it with earnestness of purpose and open the gates of the soul for it. The central act of religion, on the human side, is this expectant, co-operative raising of the soul to a personal experimental consciousness of the real presence of God. St. Gregory said : "When a soul truly desires God it already possesses Him."

Religion is primarily, and at heart, the personal meeting of the soul with God. If that experience ceases in the world, religion, in its first intention, is doomed. We may still have ideas about the God whom men once knew intimately, and we may still continue to work for human betterment, but there can be living religion only so long as the souls of men actually experience fresh bubbling of the living water within and know for themselves that a heart of eternal love beats in the central deeps of the universe within reach.

To give up the cultivation of prayer, then, means in the long run the loss of the central thing in religion ; it involves the surrender of the priceless jewel of the soul. In its stead we may perfect many other things ; we may make our form of divine service, as we call it, very artistic or very popular ; we may speak with the tongues of men and sing with the tongues almost of angels, but if we lose the power to discover and appreciate the real presence of God, and if we miss the supreme joy of feeling ourselves environed by the Spirit of the living and present God, we have made a bad exchange and have dropped from a higher to a lower type of religion.

Silence is beyond question a very important condition for the great inner act of prayer. So long as we are content to speak our own *patois*, to live in the din of our narrow, private affairs, and to tune our minds to stockbrokers' tickers, we shall not arrive at the lofty

goal of the soul's quest. We shall hear the noises of our outer universe and nothing more. When we learn how to centre down into the stillness and quiet, to listen with our souls for the whisperings of Life and Truth, to bring all our inner powers into parallelism with the set of divine currents, we shall hear tidings from the inner world at the heart and centre of which is God.

But more important than private silence is group-silence—a waiting, seeking, positively expectant attitude permeating and penetrating a gathered company of persons. We hardly know in what the group-influence consists, or why the presence of others heightens the sensitive, responsive quality of each soul, but there can be no doubt of the fact. There is some subtle telepathy that comes into play in the living silence of a congregation which makes every earnest seeker more quick to feel the presence of God, more acute of inner ear, more tender of heart to feel the bubbling of the springs of life, than any one of them would be in isolation. Somehow we are able thus to “lend our minds out,” as Browning puts it, or at least to contribute towards the formation of an atmosphere that favours communion and co-operation with God.

### III

This type of interior prayer, or prayer of intercourse and communion, received powerful emphasis through the mystically inclined groups and societies which sprang in large numbers into life with the spread of the protestant reformation.<sup>1</sup> I am referring to them especially here, not because they have brought a more intense light than the mystics before them did, nor

<sup>1</sup> It would not be difficult to illustrate, intensively and extensively, the intimate connection between prayer and mystic vision out of the writings of great mystics of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, or, again, out of the experiences of the mystics of the counter-reformation, but there have been in recent years so many illuminating studies of the experiences of these great spiritual guides that I pass them by here and draw instead upon the writings of a later group of mystics who are not so well or so widely known.

because they reveal a greater depth of soul or a more certain contact with God, but rather because they have been far too much neglected and because they are closer to us both in time and in spiritual insight. They had travelled farther than their predecessors toward an affirmation-mysticism and they have made a large contribution to the vital religion of our present-day world. These groups gathered about some intense spiritual leader and they seriously aimed to *return* to primitive Christianity. They formed their ideas from and lived upon the writings of the New Testament, taken for the most part in a simple, direct and popular way. They loved and eagerly read the writings of the great mystics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They held established ecclesiasticism and theology in very light esteem and strongly inclined toward a religion of life and experience. The various leaders called their groups of followers and disciples to make it the first business of their lives to have the Day Star rise in their own hearts; to possess the key of David which opens the inner spiritual universe to the soul; to enjoy as the true Sabbath an inward rest for the soul of man in the life of God.

The early leaders of this movement were Hans Denck, Christian Entfelder, Johann Bänderlin, Sebastian Franck, and Casper Schwenckfeld in Germany; Dirck Coornhert in Holland and Sebastian Castellio in France. The later, or second, group of leaders were Valentine Weigel and Jacob Boehme in Germany, and John Everard, William Dell, John Saltmarsh, Gerard Winstanley, Francis Rous, and Peter Sterry of England. The most important societies, or groups, that gave popular expression to this general type of experimental Christianity were the Schwenckfelders, the Family of Love, the Collegiants of Holland, the more sane and spiritual groups of the Anabaptists, the English Seekers, and the early Quakers.

Among all these diverse people the central act of

prayer was one and the same thing, an experience of inner intercourse with God. An anonymous English writer of this school of thought, writing in the seventeenth century, declared that "a man should be unto God what a house is to a man," *i.e.* a habitation of the living presence ;<sup>1</sup> and John Everard keeps saying through all his sermons that men can always hear God if they will only still the din and noise within themselves. "All the Artillery in the World," he says, "were they all discharged together at one clap, could not more deaf the ears of our bodies than the clamourings of [egoistic] desires in the soul deaf its ears ; so you see a man must go into silence or else he cannot hear God speak."<sup>2</sup>

Jacob Boehme, who was the spiritual father of most of the mystical movements and societies in the period of the English Commonwealth, was a profound exponent of this interior experimental prayer. He says : "When we pray we do not only speak before God ; indeed the will boweth itself before God ; *but it entereth into God*, and there is filled with power and virtue of God and bringeth that into the soul : the soul eateth at the table of God, and that is it of which Christ said, *Man liveth by every word of God.*"<sup>3</sup>

All over Europe in the seventeenth century there spread, both among Roman Catholics and Protestants, an intense passion for this inward, experimental prayer. The little books of Brother Lawrence very vividly portray how one earnest, simple soul endeavoured to *practise the presence of God*. But he is only one out of a multitude of lonely or busy Christians of this period who, by themselves or in little groups of seekers, were exhibiting as the central purpose of life their attempts to realise and to practise the divine presence.

A passage in Jeremy Taylor's *Life of Christ* (1649) gives a good account of the method of interior prayer, and it reveals, furthermore, the fact that great religious

<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Light of a Man in Christ Jesus* (London, 1645). ;

<sup>2</sup> *Gospel Treasures Opened* (London, 1653), p. 600.

<sup>3</sup> *Threefold Life of Man*, xvi. 95.

souls in England outside the groups of sectaries were practising the presence of God in hush and silence. Jeremy Taylor says : " There is a degree of meditation so exalted that it changes the very name and is called *contemplation*. It is in the unitive way of religion, that is, it consists in unions and adherences to God ; it is a prayer of quietness and silence, a meditation extraordinary, a discourse without variety, a vision and intuition of divine excellencies, an immediate entry into an orb of light, and a resolution of all our faculties into sweetnesses, affections, and starings upon the divine beauty." This way of prayer, he says, is " not to be discoursed about but felt," but, he adds, it is a way by which the soul " flames out into great ascents."

The early Quakers from 1648 on made silence and personal prayer of inward discourse the very basis of their way of worship. They gathered and sat down in the quiet, possessed with a common faith that God was a *real presence* in their group, and that they were admitted behind the veil into a holy of holies. There were often tears of joy, or signs of rapture, on their faces as they sat in this living hush, and sometimes a tremulous movement swept over the whole company, like a fresh breeze over ripe grain.

Robert Barclay, the foremost scholar of the early Quakers, has described how this impressed him when he first experienced it before he became a Quaker. " When I came into their silent assemblies," he says, " I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up."

George Whitehead, one of the pillar Quakers of the seventeenth century, in a concrete illustration of this effect, tells how he saw a young woman who had drifted into a Quaker meeting so moved by the power of the silence that she could stand it no longer, but going outside put her face in her hands and cried out : " O God, make me clean ! O God, make me clean ! "

One of the most striking accounts is that given by Isaac Penington of his impression the first time he attended a Quaker meeting. "When I came among them," he says, "I felt the presence and power of the Most High, and words of Truth from the Spirit of Truth reached my heart and conscience. I did not only feel words and demonstrations from without, but I felt the dead quickened and the seed raised up, insomuch that my heart said: 'This is He, there is no other! This is He whom I have waited for and sought after from my childhood. . . . I have met with my God. I have met with my Saviour and I have felt the healings drop into my soul.'"

No other English mystic of the eighteenth century compares with William Law in spiritual insight, depth of experience, and power of expression. In the later period of his life, after he had come under the influence of Jacob Boehme, prayer became for him a way of inner experience of intercourse and a joyous practice of the divine presence, and religion was henceforth always thought of as the *operation of God* working, unhindered and with positive human co-operation, through persons. In almost the same words as the Quaker Penington, Law says: "A new life is opened in my soul. I am brought home to myself. I have found my God. I know that His dwelling-place, His kingdom, is within me."<sup>1</sup> When religion has done its perfect work, has melted away human passions and selfish inclinations, prayer changes, Law again declares, to something far higher than petition or request. It comes now so near to God, finds such union with Him, that the soul *does not so much pray as live in God.*<sup>2</sup>

It should be said in conclusion that this consciousness of a great Companion, this discovery of life-enhancing energies within, this mutual correspondence with what seems to be a real heavenly Friend, is not confined to a few chosen spirits of the genius type. It

<sup>1</sup> *Spirit of Prayer*, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 128.

is a far more common experience than the mere reader of books would realise. The mystics of history to whom we go for data are the few and rare persons who possessed a literary gift and who could report in living and winged words the experiences of God that were granted them. But as there were poets before Homer, so, too, there have been great mystics who lived

upon the shining table-lands  
To which our God Himself is moon and sun,

but who could not tell to others what they saw and felt and knew. Their only way of uttering the vision of their souls was through a heightened life and a radiant personality, witnessing like the little brooks in Browning's *Saul* :

With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so, it is so."

There are multitudes of men and women now living, often in out-of-the-way places, in remote hamlets or on uneventful farms, who are the salt of the earth and the light of the world in their communities, because they have had vital experiences that revealed to them realities which their neighbours missed, and energy to live by which the mere "church-goers" failed to find. I have personally known many such lives, to one of whom only I shall refer. He never once in his life swung out of his ordinary orbit. There were no flights of fancy, no spurts of enthusiasm, no uprushes of genius—the entire life was a plain, steady, straightforward march through the daily routine of commonplace duties. And yet—and yet it was one of the noblest lives I have ever known. It exhibited almost every quality which we demand in a saint. There was at the heart of the man a religious passion which throbbed in everything he did. Nobody knew, he least of all, what his theological system was. He never bothered to think it out. But nobody ever hoed a row of potatoes with him, or pitched a load of hay, without discovering his *religion*.



His religion showed itself even to his sheep and cows and horses. He did not learn how to express himself until he was long past middle life, and he was already growing old when he learned to pray in public, but before there were any words which told of that religious passion and devotion we all knew it was there. It radiated from him like light from a luminous body. Little children always believed in him and enjoyed being with him, and he loved them with a warmth which was a surprise to those who knew only the matter-of-fact side of his nature.

This transforming experience through direct relation with God inwardly revealed is, further, confined to no one type of piety. It appears again and again not only among those reputed to be mystical, but as well among those who are emphatically evangelical. It would be difficult to find a more striking illustration than that written by Jonathan Edwards of Sarah Pierrepont :

They say there is a young lady in New Haven who is beloved of that great Being who made and rules the world, and that there are certain seasons in which this great Being, in some way or other invisible, comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight, and that she hardly cares for anything except to meditate on Him. . . . She has a strange sweetness in her mind, and singular purity in her affections ; is most just and conscientious in all her conduct ; and you could not persuade her to do anything wrong or sinful, if you would give her all the world, lest she should offend this great Being. She is of a wonderful calmness, and universal benevolence of mind ; especially after this great God has manifested Himself to her mind. She will sometimes go about from place to place singing sweetly ; and seems to be always full of joy and pleasure, and no one knows for what. She loves to be alone, walking in the fields and groves, and seems to have some one invisible always conversing with her.

Many of the primitive preachers of the Methodist movement, who generally believed themselves to be anti-mystical, were recipients of experiences which raised them far above their ordinary human level and gave

them abounding life. John Nelson, the Yorkshire mason, was one of these. He says in describing his experience: "My soul seemed to breathe its life in God as naturally as my body breathed life in the common air." John Haime was another rough specimen wrought into a life of goodness and power by the operative grace of God. He lived in terror of the judgment during his period of sin, and "many times," he says, "I stopped in the street afraid to go one step farther lest I should step into hell." Then came the great experience which led to his new career:

One day, as I walked by the Tweed side, I cried aloud, being all athirst for God, "Oh that Thou wouldst hear my prayer, and let my cry come up before Thee!" The Lord heard. He sent a gracious answer. He lifted me up out of the dungeon. He took away my sorrow and fear, and filled my soul with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The stream glided swiftly along, and all nature seemed to rejoice with me. I was truly free; and had I had any to guide me I need never more have come into bondage.

One more instance must suffice and that shall be from the life of the illiterate but extraordinary evangelist, Billy Bray. He describes his initial experience of the new life as follows:

I said to the Lord: "Thou hast said, they that ask shall receive, they that seek shall find, and to them that knock the door shall be opened, and I have faith to believe it." In an instant the Lord made me so happy that I cannot express what I felt. I shouted for joy. I praised God with my whole heart. . . . I think this was in November, 1823, but what day of the month I do not know. I remember this, that everything looked new to me, the people, the fields, the cattle, the trees. I was like a new man in a new world. I spent the greater part of my time in praising the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

It would undoubtedly be a grave mistake and blunder to reduce prayer, with its vast gamut of

<sup>1</sup> W. F. Bourne, *The King's Son, a Memoir of Billy Bray*, p. 9 (London, Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1887).

possibilities, to the simplicity of mystic vision and inner intercourse. But both in its origin as the homing instinct of the soul and in its consummation as the joyous practice of the presence of God in the experience of the ripest and richest souls, this inner way of communion is an impressive *fact* of life. I believe we are justified in going still farther, and in asserting that it is the central act of prayer, the living ground and basis of religion. It is surely in some sense because of this experience that we have gained the abiding assurance that

. . . the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

V

REPENTANCE AND HOPE

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "PRO CHRISTO ET ECCLESIA"

ALSO AUTHOR OF "CHRISTUS FUTURUS," "ABSENTE REO," "VOLUNTAS DEI"  
"THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIANITY"

## SYNOPSIS

### INTRODUCTION.

The supreme need of the soul is to realise God's love and to love Him. The temper of the "elder brother" in the parable of the Prodigal Son is too often the temper of Christian religion. We think sackcloth and ashes a safer *régime* for sinners than festive joy. This essay contends that true faith will neither minimise man's sin and degradation nor the joy of assurance and security in God's all-forgiving love.

### WHAT IS SIN ?

Sin has two aspects, racial and personal. Out of these grows a third, sin as corporate.

The word sin is here taken to mean all coming short of what God intends for us, that is, all deviation from man's right development, conscious and unconscious, individual and social.

(a) Racial sin. We cannot ascribe to God's will and pleasure the shocking evils that have developed with man's development, nor is there any evidence that these evils were necessary phases of that development. Christian faith acknowledges that a large element of human activity has been transgression against the Divine law and purpose, and this transgression affects the heredity and environment of every soul born into the world. Souls thus born do not hold within themselves a spiritual perception of the perfect will of God for man ; their standards are corrupt and require constant revision.

(b) Personal sin. Conformity to a received moral standard does not make the individual sinless if he is not eager for further inspiration and enlightenment. He may be slaying God's prophets while he thinks to do Him service. Human progress depends upon the number of men in any community who are determined not only to do right, but to find out what is right. Bishop Creighton's indictment of Christian persecution considered. Dr. Henry Sidgwick quoted to the effect that it is more necessary for the world's good that men should know better what is right than that they should will more effectively to do what they now think right.

### WHAT IS REPENTANCE ?

No advance is possible in any department of human activity without constant correction of thought and ideal, *i.e.* change of mind, *μετάνοια*.

Constant repentance in moral and religious matters is essential to individual and social regeneration. Repentance consists of three parts :

- (a) The vision of something holy and glorious as yet unattained.
- (b) The desire to attain it.
- (c) The voluntary nerving of the brain and grip of thought involved in reaching out after the ideal. Wisdom, or enlightenment as to what is right, is not virtue if it merely comes as a reasonable conviction. True repentance is a sudden chiming of man's whole mind with God's, which produces an inflow of new life and light. Penitence without change of mind is futile.

#### TRADITIONAL REPENTANCE.

Modern manuals upon penitence quoted. Evidence as to the value of a penitential life considered. Wesley's doctrines of "justification" and "assurance," considered in regard to the moral results of his activity.

#### THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH.

Sin is invariably followed by evil consequences. These ill consequences fall as largely upon the innocent as upon the guilty, often more so. These ill consequences follow whether the sin was intentional or unintentional, whether the agent was responsible or irresponsible. True faith in God does not blink these facts. Corporate mistakes and superstitions of communities entail misery upon generations. The vice of an individual may degrade whole families and communities. The result on the soul of the sinner is moral obliquity and a liability to ever-increasing sinfulness. If we believe, as our Lord seems to have taught, that the habits of the soul in this life are projected into the next, we shall believe that the inevitable and natural results of sin as seen in this life will affect the condition in which each soul starts upon the next life.

#### DOES GOD PUNISH SIN ?

Punishment implies penalty on account of responsible guilt. In common idea, justice awards pain in exact proportion to the extent of the offence and the degree to which the offender was responsible. The only evil results of sin which can be considered as proportioned to the sin and the sinner's responsibility are the increase of moral obliquity and liability to sin ; but these do not usually involve a corresponding sensitiveness to pain or realisation of penalty, but rather dullness and stupidity. There is therefore no evidence from the facts of life to lead us to suppose that God's justice involves the infliction of pain as a punishment for sin.

Development of human conception of justice traced historically. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" limits the natural man's desire for vengeance. This conception of justice as the rendering of a limited vengeance underlies Old Testament ideas of God's justice. The moral results considered of a penal code which undervalues human life as compared with property. Change in modern methods of educating children. Experiments in new method of treating juvenile and adult criminals. Our Lord's teaching concerning the

natural results of sin gives no colour to the belief that disasters are the judgments of God.

#### THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE.

From the dim past, through the whole of history, we can see that wherever man has followed the law of his true development, rightness of living has been followed by abundance of life. A tendency in human nature, when unfettered, to revert to health and to efforts after goodness and wisdom, shows that the push of life incites man to co-operate with the purpose of God ; but in history rightness and sin, good and evil consequences, are so confused that it is only in the precepts and example of Jesus Christ that the principles of true human well-being and the secret of man's true power are revealed. Nothing but goodness cancels sin. The results of goodness are as inevitable as the results of sin ; they are more permanent and of quicker growth.

#### WHAT IS FORGIVENESS ?

The prayer of repentance brings full and free remission of sins by the forgiveness of God. Forgiveness is not the overlooking of an offence ; it is not the remission of penalty, although that may be incidental to it. It is restoration to the relation that existed before the offence was committed. The normal life of the human soul is a life in God ; the Divine goodness and strength are the proper food of the human soul. Forgiveness is restoration to all this. It involves the inflow of goodness into the forgiven soul. The grace of forgiveness is an actual upspringing of love to God and man, and a consequent impulse to noble activity in the soul. Such activity produces results more swift and more permanent than the results of sin. The souls of men are not static ; they are living, growing, always throwing off the old and developing the new. Thus the prayer of repentance, which brings new life, can save the soul and turn all its activities into a world-saving force.

## V

### REPENTANCE AND HOPE

It is above all things necessary, for the glory of God, for our own welfare, and for the salvation of the world, that we should rejoice more each day in the great love with which God loves us. The message of the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection, is this—that God is man's eternal Lover. Even an earthly love is imperfect—although all austere hearts in the world should say to the contrary—even earthly love is imperfect when it desires only the welfare of its object without desiring love in return. What is the glory of a lover? Is it not to be enjoyed by the beloved? Therefore, to glorify God and to enjoy Him are one and the same. It is the heart knowledge of this which will advance us more in prayer than all sin offerings and sacrifices.

We have most of us partaken of the swine husks of the far country. Even though we turned and came home, we brought some with us to eat by the way; and the elder brother is always telling us that we should hoard them carefully, and eat a little each day, to remind ourselves of our miserable selves. What are these husks? They are the disagreeable physical consequences of our bad and foolish actions, and the sad, mournful memories that those actions leave behind them. The elder brother thinks these husks are profitable for us—thinks that we ought not to try to escape the physical consequences and that we ought to brood



upon the memories. He is also always telling us that, in spite of the Father's bounty, we ought to think and act for years to come as if we were only hired servants. Now, this is exactly what the hard, cruel nature in our own hearts also tells us ; so we listen to the elder brother. Who is the elder brother ? He is the ordinary devout person who, like ourselves, has a core of hardness and cruelty in his heart. He believes that offenders ought to be treated with severity. He knows he is none too good, so he treats himself with severity ; he does not ask for a kid or seek to make merry with his friends. We prodigals are sons of the same slave mother as he. Encouraged by him, we slip out from the feast the Father offers ; we throw aside the robe and the ring, and go beyond the sound of the music and the dancing feet. We only seek to enjoy our home at rare intervals. We persist in toiling, and often sigh and furtively munch our imported husks.

Think now again of the picture our Lord drew of that great-hearted, generous father in the parable—a prince of love ! Think of him with no one to enjoy his love, no one to understand him or love him ; the elder brother with him always—*always*, that would be the sting of it—ever with him, but never understanding or rejoicing. How sad a picture ! Yet that is the way we very often treat God. And not only so, but the hard core of our hearts has so long dominated our lives that we truly think that God is like ourselves, that it is His will—some are apt to say His fault—that our lives are not more full of joy and nobility and grandeur than they are.

Some urge that God banishes us from the enjoyment of His presence while we retain our sinful nature and habits, and that if we deny this we ignore the awful fact of sin. They urge this because in recognising the two facts, God and evil, it is most difficult for men to see life steadily and see it whole. The Greek, who at one period came nearest to this achievement, just missed the

vision of Love as the Supreme Power, and therefore missed the consequent sense of personal obligation to the Divine will which alone can justify for the rational mind the idea of sin. The early Hebrew, with the more limited notion of a tribal God of uncertain justice, still conceived of God as showing a personal devotion to his nation, and acknowledged a consequent obligation the breach of which was sin. Without some belief in God's personal love exercised toward sinful man, primitive taboos do not develop into an abiding moral conception of sin.

But although any moral idea of sin has its roots in some belief in God as Love, men who thus catch a glimpse of the true nature of wrongdoing are apt to become obsessed with the thought of it until this obsession almost obscures their vision of God's love and loveliness, and the loveliness of the earth He has created. In this obsession Religion—both Pagan and Christian—too often thought of God chiefly as Wrath, and not only arrayed herself in sackcloth and ashes but carried a scourge. Therefore Reason and Good Feeling have too often turned their backs on Religion, obviously or covertly, and gone off hand in hand to build the House Beautiful without conscious regard to God. So well have they often built, that true Religion, always sincere, has experienced reaction of mind, sitting in doubt, and in some of her moods she has herself become inclined to look upon wrongdoing as a necessary evil productive of good, and sin as non-existent.

It may be said that in some such reaction of thought to-day the majority of well-intentioned, God-serving people refuse to concern themselves much about sin and repentance; but they do not tend, as a consequence, to rejoice in God's friendship. As far as the theology of modern indifference to sin is articulate, we find that it speaks of the Supreme Power rather as impersonal, acquiescent Goodwill than as personal Love seeking ceaselessly to ennoble each child of man and win his

love and so to produce on earth, and beyond, the ideal society or Kingdom of God.

It is the contention of this essay that true Christian faith will neither minimise man's sin and degradation and his constant need of repentance, nor will it fail to see the fundamental wholesomeness and beauty of human character and of the earth life as the image of God's thought: and that, above all, Christian faith will rest secure always in the personal love of God for the individual soul—a love all-creating, a reality so supreme as to dominate all jarring facts, and therefore a love in which every man, always, is called upon to rejoice.

### WHAT IS SIN?

In Christian teaching we commonly hear of sin in two aspects—as racial and as personal. Out of these grows a third aspect of sin as corporate.

In its first aspect it is racial and universal. Thus the Anglican Catechism teaches children that they are “by nature born in sin and children of wrath.” Baptism is, no doubt, viewed as changing wrath into grace, but Catholic theology recognises sin—both conscious and unconscious—as pertaining to baptized as well as unbaptized persons. Evangelical theology takes the same view of the universality of sin; I quote from a study by one of this school:

The religious view of sin regards it as universal. It finds the whole of mankind to be in need of redemption. And this view becomes a keen and immediate experience to any one who stands like Isaiah or Job in the presence of God, or like Simon Peter in the presence of Christ. Undoubtedly the divine nature makes exceedingly high demands upon us; but the love of God, whatever varied forms it takes, never compromises the requirements of holiness for our momentary convenience. In God's presence we know at once that we ought to be like Him, and that we are not. We are polluted; He is stainless white. . . . The Old Testament thought of

the angels themselves as spotted with evil. Jesus Christ proclaims that none is good save God.<sup>1</sup>

In this wide sense sin may be defined as whatever man is or does which differs from God's ideal of what he ought to do or be.

While the Church has always emphasised this universal aspect of sin, we nowadays connect the sense of guilt only with sin in its second aspect, as the conscious, personal violation of any known duty. Much modern thought, indeed, tends to regard the racial view of sin as an artificial idea. It would ascribe to God's will and pleasure the whole course of evolution, animal and human, as we know it, and with it the condition into which every man is born. Or, if men hesitate to ascribe so much evil to God, they still do not now regard themselves as in any way guilty of their evil tendencies and unconscious lapses. Conscious misdirection on the part of the individual will is all that they recognise as sin.

The limiting of guilt to individual choice came with the individualism which was so wholesome a reaction, first from the corporate, tribal consciousness, and, later, from the encroachments of mediaeval religion upon individual responsibility. We are now tending to think of a man as less individually responsible for his own shortcomings or crimes, and more responsible for living so as to ensure the moral elevation of the whole community. Thus it is possible that we shall come again to emphasise—and perhaps to over-emphasise—racial sin or the sin of humanity, thinking less of the sins of the individual because we now realise so keenly that man's moral life is corporate, that as a result of a universal tendency to evil, whole communities commit sins which each member shares although he takes no personal initiative in the matter. We must seek to look steadily at all these aspects of sin; we must seek to have feeling sensitive to all.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. R. Macintosh, *Christianity and Sin*, p. 159.

Can we be sinful without being guilty? What the psychologists call "negative self-feeling," or consciousness of inferiority, when this is moral, involves in its most notable forms, consciousness of guilt. It thus seems to have been confused with guilt in early times. It does not follow, however, that a man feeling morally inferior in the presence of God—as described in the above quotation—is actually guilty of any conscious misdirection of will; the keenest moral shame may be felt when for the first time a man sees that he has honestly admired what was unworthy. Any element of what we should call "personal moral guilt" was a late addition to the Hebrew notion which we translate "sin." We will revert to the older meaning of the word "sin" in this paper, using it to cover both its more general and its more individual sense, and to mean all coming short of what God intends for us, whether the shortcoming be conscious or unconscious, whether individual or corporate. In this sense it is possible to sin without being personally guilty.

What, then, constitutes sin? It depends upon what the will of God for men is.

We have much confused our knowledge of right and of God by commonly talking of the best choice a man can make under given circumstances as "the right," while we go on to assume that such a type of conduct is the highest to which under earthly circumstances we can attain. That is, we assume that because it is right to take the least bad of various bad ways, such a way should become a standard of conduct. The next slovenly step in thought is easy; we claim for this standard the authority of God. A man who falls into a pit certainly must get out; one side of the pit may be slimy and sloping, the other precipitous rock; his choice lies between crawling out bemired or bruising himself in ape-like climbing. No one would question that he does right to get out and get his feet once more on the sunny land; and while men might differ as to

which is the better method of getting out, it is quite clear that he does right to choose the way he thinks the better. But if, because of this, he go on to exalt ape-like climbing, or crawling through mire, as a *per se* desirable standard of manly locomotion, he reasons badly.

If we have any moral sense telling us what is and is not evil, we must admit, on reading history, that humanity early found itself in the pit of sin. I give three illustrations of how men, in their endeavours to struggle out of that pit, have shown the confusion of thought just suggested.

(1) When tribes and nations had conceived no better means of struggling for existence than waging wars of aggression on more prosperous peoples, it was the best thing a man could do to fight along with his people. Each tribesman felt this to be the call of right, and proceeded to consider that form of valour the highest standard to which man could attain, and to picture God as the God of hosts, leading them on to the cruel destruction of their enemies.

(2) Again, in the ancient world, when little was known of child psychology, the free use of the rod by the father was constantly found better than leaving the child untrained; again, the best available was elevated into a standard of virtue and attributed to God.

(3) When the early mediaeval Christian missionary was sent to Christianise ignorant men in masses and make them accept a somewhat cumbrous theology, often the best thing he could do was to silence ignorant questioning by intellectual authority. This, by degrees, came to be raised into a standard method of religious education. God came to be represented as imposing a complex theological and ethical system upon the human understanding, and condemning all souls who rebelled against its intellectual tyranny.

These illustrations show that the best a man can do in an imperfect society is easily assumed to be a

permanent law for humanity. While there is great ethical value in good intention and that earnestness of purpose which counts ease as loss, if these are employed in conformity to a past standard—social, political or religious—the man who is thus doing his best may be involved in a whole complex course of life in which he and his associates fall far below what they might attain if they revised their standards. They may, then, be jointly guilty of great corporate sins while they think they are doing right.

The revision of standards requires the previous recognition of the fact that when a man does what he seriously thinks right he may still be doing what is disapproved of God. It is true that he would do worse if he failed to do what he thought right; but his conformity to standard is not enough; he must be eager for further inspiration and enlightenment, because the knowledge of right and wrong rests alone with God. It comes to man by the inspiration of the Divine Spirit; it does not reside within the spirit of man. His heart and his reason, when open to God, are the channels by which God can guide him.

There are whole systems of moral and religious teaching under which a child is trained from the cradle to believe that its own heart and reason are never the channels through which comes knowledge of good and evil. Systems of morals based on authority, theological or military, naturally inculcate distrust of reason; systems of self-culture based on asceticism naturally inculcate distrust of the affections. History plainly shows that generations of people thus trained to distrust these natural channels of God's grace have come to call right what is actually wrong. These cannot be said to act in the best way for themselves and the world, or with God's approval, merely because they do what they think right. The knowledge of right is not in them. They may not be blameworthy, but they are running counter to true righteousness.

*E.g.* the soldier trained in a fierce militarism may think acts of "frightfulness" his duty, yet they are not pleasing to God. Such cases prove that it is not true that a man has always within himself the knowledge of what is right to do, and therefore we have no reason to believe that principles conscientiously held are infallible guides in other cases where the wrong teaching and wrong action are of a less obvious nature.

To some the whole structure of moral principle will seem to fall away if this be admitted, but I incline to think that experience condemns it, and that a nobler principle of action can be built upon recognition of its falsity. In communities of well-intentioned people a sense of failure or sin has commonly been reserved for action that failed to reach their own standards. When they came within moderate distance of these standards the majority were satisfied. It has only been here and there that stray and often obscure prophets have asked God to forgive them, not only for their conscious lapses, but for what seemed to them their highest ideals, their noblest deeds, and their most fervent prayers. Yet it is these few who have been the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Until the commonality of religious folk are as intent upon asking God each day to open up to them fresh vistas of truth and duty as they are upon asking for the moral strength to live up to the duty they see, until they realise that God's grace comes to them, not because they are doing right, nor because they repent of some conscious lapse, but because they constantly hold up to Him their conscious emptiness and ignorance to be filled with His fulness, Christendom will make but little real progress in individual or corporate virtue. It goes without saying that a man must do what he sees to be his duty, but God's approval only rests upon him if he is humbly seeking a deeper insight into the privileges and demands of the Christian life.

Further, if, as Christians believe, God bestows upon



men His Spirit to teach them what His will is, that knowledge must be worked out in the community in order that it may be fully realised in the individual life, because while the individual is in advance of his community he is not in harmony with it and is hindered by it.

Sometimes, in order to preserve the conventional belief that a man, if he will, can always know God's standard for human life and live up to it, theology has met the preceding argument in two ways. It will urge (1) that each man, at some time, has had in his heart of hearts a glimpse of the standard of ideal values that would have enabled him to extricate himself from a wrong prevailing system (*e.g.* that all Christian persecutors have known that they acted wickedly); or (2) that such wrong systems are always the highest social ideal for the time and place in which they obtain (*e.g.* that Christian persecutions were a necessary phase of development). I am convinced that there is no sufficient evidence in support of either of these assertions. Men trained in, and surrounded by, bad moral standards have their whole inner life more or less formed by them, however "conscientious" they may be; nor is there any reason for supposing that human systems which have prevailed and become historic have been the best that could have been. Progress is not mechanical. In every age and place it has depended upon the number of men who were determined, not only to do right, but to find out what was right. Here and there, where men have together sought both to do and to know the right, a high level in social conditions has obtained, and a permanent contribution to the world's progress has been made. Here and there, where men have singly and alone sought both a higher light and a stronger sense of obligation, they too have contributed to the world's progress, but they have also been stoned, and their ideas garbled, for lack of corporate support. For the most part, men have either sought to

conform to some tradition and neglected their obligation to seek higher standards of conduct, or, becoming restive and speculative in thought, have neglected monotonous virtues, and thus often degenerated even from standards formerly realised. To call such evils necessary, or to call progress the natural fruit of time, is absurd. To a community earnest to discover and conform to truth, beauty and justice, one day is as a thousand years. It leaps out of barbarism with apparent suddenness ; it shines from one horizon to another. Jerusalem under Nehemiah, Rome in the best days of the Republic, Athens in its prime, the fellowship of the Early Church—these bear little relation to the condition of other communities at the same time or to the corrupt stagnation of nations to whom a thousand years have brought less progress than a day of renaissance might have secured. The ancients ascribed both progress and stagnation equally to God ; we cannot do so.

It appears, then, that when men seek both to get light and to perform duty, they realise that the good life can only be lived in the good society, and failing that, a man can but do the best open to him in the system in which he finds himself, and strive always to bring about a better system.

This point is very important in trying to estimate the nature of sin. As already intimated, a very lofty conception of right, which contributed greatly to the world's progress, was formed in the best period of ancient Greece. But the good Greek citizen required the πόλις in which to exercise his virtue ; it was not thought that he could live the good life if he were cast astray among barbarous tribes. When his πόλις was subjugated by the invader he carried everywhere the ideals formed in the days of its freedom ; these ideals were a real and lasting contribution to the progress of less enlightened parts of the world, but the progress of the Greek was arrested when his community was overborne by foreign conquest. Another small nation that

fixed its eye steadily on the necessity of an ideal state for the ideal life was the Jewish. The Jewish conception of good and right was at once higher and less definite ; but they were quite definite in their insistence on the fact that God's will for the individual could not be realised until God's will for the state was realised.

The position of Judah, a little land between contending civilisations, was like that of Flanders. If the people of Flanders had developed for themselves a very strong and distinctive conception of good, both for the individual and the state, we can see that their desire for independent political existence to work out that conception would be intensified by the whole miserable history in which they have so often struggled, and are still struggling, for freedom. Such struggling nations in all ages might easily confuse their own political independence with the conception of the ideal community, but the religious element in their ideal for the community would not be less significant. It was such a struggle for national existence that in the Jewish nation gave birth to the Apocalyptic hope. Civilisation to the Jew was not progress except in so far as it was theocentric civilisation. This is his great contribution to the world.

The Apocalyptic poets saw unspeakable visions of the ideal state, and saw it brought about by the power of God to the overthrowing of such world-civilisation as did not contribute to it. But they mixed up this religious conception with angry political passions and carnal dreams of a savage revenge upon oppressors. They felt sure that God was on the side both of their spiritual ideals and their political passions, and would swiftly vindicate both. This mixture of a sure faith in the highest religious ideals with an oppressed people's carnal thirst for vengeance is expressed in such highly figurative language that we have reason to distrust the materialistic interpretation which some theologians have placed upon the Jewish expectations of that period.

What is important for us is that when our Lord came He endorsed to the full the belief that God's will being realised in the individual on earth involves His will being realised in a Kingdom of God on earth, and that this is the only worthy goal of human endeavour. He dissociated this ideal from the thirst for political revenge and political ambition, for He seems to have foretold the advent of the ideal state and the downfall of the Jewish state.

This endorsement and purifying of social aspiration by our Lord is very important in relation to the question of the nature of sin. It lifts it out of all legalism. The emphasis is thrown upon achievement rather than upon abstention. Men are to seek for, to labour for, the Kingdom. It sets aside the whole question of the incidence of guilt as of secondary importance. The all-important matter is that God shall win His victory in the world. If our social condition falls short of the social standard which God has put within our ken, we are living in corporate sin; but we could only know the extent of each soul's share in this sin if we could know how far each might have sought to make the noblest standard of life the common standard and did not. This we cannot know. We have all transgressed the Divine purpose; we have all come short of that renovated theocentric life which God has put within our reach.

To take this failure to reach the highest social standard as our sin seems at first sight to make the distinction between holiness and sin less significant, and the standard of moral values too vague. But if we start at the other side of the subject—at the point of wrong and personal initiative and conscious sin—we shall find ourselves forced to work back to the same conclusion, and see it perhaps more clearly.

There is a very general belief that much waywardness in child or man, often called "sin" by our religious teachers, is not sinful. But few responsible minds are willing to argue from this that moral guilt does not

exist ; rather they say that certain wicked actions to which all men are prone are rightly called "sin." If we ask such people where they draw the line, their answers make it clear that they have no definition of sin, that even in their most intimate conduct they are not quite sure what is sinful and what is not. Certain acts they may be sure are sinful, but psychological examination shows that these were led up to by innumerable actions and conditions of mind which, had they not culminated in some excess, would have been passed by as sinless. To limit sin or conscious guilt to certain obviously wicked actions or moods cannot be right, because it is just that way of looking at sin which our Lord condemned when He declared that the milder form of any sin was the same in kind as the overt act. Or again, the modern Liberal confessor often regards only some excess of inward mood as sinful—the sin, although only in thought, still consisting in excess. This may be temporary wisdom ; it is not a true facing of facts ; for the predisposing, more temperate moods are the same in kind, and without them the excess would not come about. *E.g.* the man who has allowed himself to look upon his own side of every question almost exclusively, dwelling on every argument that pleases him, and merely glancing at the opposing argument to deny it, will, if circumstances happen to make it easy, overreach or override his neighbour in material things. A moderate degree of habitual injustice to his neighbour's opinions is the same in kind as an overt injustice to his neighbour's material rights. And the same might be said of almost any form of sin.

Our severer teachers, who have proclaimed that there is no line to be drawn between trivial and important iniquities, and that our daily life from childhood up is full of sin, are scientifically in the right of it. Sin is something that runs like a woof thread through the warp of our life. It is in our heredity ; it is in our environment ; and how far each soul is to blame for its share

none can tell—certainly not the soul itself, or any onlooking moralist, however skilful a spiritual director he may be.

We inherit from the animal world passions difficult to understand, subtle in their revenge whether over-cultivated or suppressed ; digestive organs that so easily poison the brain that slight and passing manias often unconsciously distort the moral vision ; self-regarding desires, excessive as soon as civilisation makes the necessities of life available without the need to risk life ; nerves too easily set off the normal balance ; and participation in the corporate mind of herd or pack which makes us liable to mental epidemics. Very much splendid theological sophistry has gone to make all this appear necessary and good, because whatever is not of man's conscious evil will was held to be of God ; but deep down in the springs of our nature is something which recognises evil in this inheritance—and we recognise God as the author of good only ; and we cannot worship Him without admitting that some element inimical to His purpose, and which cannot be covered by conscious evil-doing, mars the world. As we are using the word "sin" in this essay to mean whatever phase of life comes short of God's purpose for His creation, we are bound to admit that we inherit sin and find it in the whole atmosphere of our environment, that it obscures from us not only the love of God, but also His standard for humanity, and that it is only by each of us seeking with might and main to hand on a better inheritance and environment that our race can come into line with God's creative purpose and be in union with Him.

If it be felt that there is something unnecessarily confusing in the idea that sin is partly to be found in our physical inheritance, it must be remembered that the renovation or re-creation of what we call "lower nature" was part of the Christian message in its very inception. It was upon an earth brought into obedience to God

that our Lord foretold His future reign, and St. Paul, as in a vision, saw the whole creation perfected. If everything that exists were according to God's will except man's conscious sin, it is quite clear that this renovation of earth, this redemption of the whole creation—spoken of by our Lord and St. Paul—would be unnecessary. Church teaching has always contained this belief in racial or corporate sin, and I think it will be seen later on that this larger view of sin becomes very illuminating.

Again, an action has ethical quality apart from conforming to or violating the agent's sense of duty. Because the sinfulness of an action is not proportionate to its accidental evil results it does not follow that its ethical quality lies only in the intention, or the final result proposed by the agent. In judging the ethical quality of an action its natural results upon the moral character of the agent and those associated with him must be taken into account, whether the agent could perceive these or not. A Calvinist mother of a recent generation refused to teach her children the harsher doctrines of her creed, declaring that she would rather they grew up wicked than miserable. This she did with a strong sense of a guilty conscience. Later in life she was perceived to have developed a finer character, and brought up a more virtuous family than most of her neighbours. Such good consequences, if merely accidental, could not prove her action good; but they were not what we call accidental, and therefore they indicate that her action had a good quality in spite of her prolonged sense of violated duty. We should most of us admit that in the long ages of slavery and religious persecution men may have helped ill-treated fugitives to escape, convinced that in doing so they were yielding to insubordinate and unworthy desires of their hearts, and that duty lay in another course. The action was such that, in spite of the conscious violation of supposed duty, they would naturally be

better men for doing it, and in a better position to attain new light. In the same way, actions that people perform with a strong sense of duty may harden and coarsen the character and close the eyes to higher light, and thus must be judged as ethically bad actions.

All the hatred, malice and uncharitableness, all the self-righteousness and spiritual pride, fostered—unconsciously fostered—by the defence of religious or political causes each supposed to be the cause of God, must count as evidence of the ethical quality of the actions involved. Let us take, as example, the case of persecution. The late Dr. Mandell Creighton, in his Hulsean Lectures of 1894, makes a very able defence of the position that the Christian always knew, always knows, that religious persecution is condemned by the law of God and the spirit of the Gospel. Let us consider this. Persecution cannot be limited to legal action, which is what Dr. Creighton has primarily in mind. The spirit of persecution works publicly and privately in a thousand ways; thus we can examine it as we see it in existence to-day. The roots of persecution lie in the attribution of moral inferiority to those who differ from us in any opinion we hold to be righteous, and in the belief that God works righteousness by denunciations and condemnations rather than by inward persuasions, so that in thus working man is imitating and pleasing Him. The notion that our opponents are morally inferior rests on the very assumption that they know, or could know, or could at one time have known, that what they call right is wrong. The belief may be honestly held, yet the result is always not only some form of cruelty to the neighbour, but degeneration of personal character.

Thus in many circles to-day, where pious dames and ministers of religion forgather, depreciation of the political or religious opponent of the hour is the favourite topic of conversation. But I do not think that all such people know that they are making the



lower choice or rebelling against God ; I do not think it is a fair reading of facts to assume that they all must sometime have known ; I believe that many of them honestly think that the spirit they thus foster in all who come under their influence is the chief bulwark of the Church of Christ. Such people have some vivid conception of the cause of God on which they fix their attention, and they do not stay to analyse the methods by which they seek to promote that cause ; nor are they conscious of the spiritual pride and self-righteousness their judgments involve. These very people go home and examine themselves by the rule of some familiar manual of devotion, humbly straining out gnats, unconscious of camels.

How many fathers have sent their sons into wrong courses by painfully endeavouring to break the high spirits that ought to have been fostered and guided, and themselves lost gentleness of heart and spiritual insight in the process. How many mothers have turned many to unrighteousness by instilling into the tender minds of their daughters prudery in honest mistake for purity, and lost their own chance of the beauty of holiness in the process. Consider all that self-interested conduct which, in many times and places, has been taught as the first duty of man, and when markedly successful has been honoured and applauded in every civilised state, but which has been the direct cause, not only of the growth of slums, the neglect of prisons, and the inadequacy of schools, but of the spiritual degeneracy of the very class of men who wrought the mischief. Wrongs wrought by fanatical asceticism, by patriots in the awful emergencies of war, by youth in its headlong, vice-breeding rush for natural pleasures, are not the result of evil intention, but they leave the character of the agent stained and his mind unprepared for higher light. These wrongs, although on very different levels, all arise from moral blindness. There are very different causes for moral blindness, but the assumption

that it is always the fault of the blind soul is not borne out by experience. The idea that such men could know, or could once have known, that what they call right is wrong, is merely academic. It is not the verdict of fact. Actions which are committed with a knowledge, clear or dim, that they are wrong and ought not to be done, constitute but a small part of wrong thinking, wrong feeling and wrong doing.

In a small book of essays published near the end of his life, Henry Sidgwick gives it as his opinion that if all men did what they thought right without further enlightenment the world would be a worse place. He says that the causes of men's failure to do right "divide themselves naturally under two distinct heads. Firstly, men do not *see* their duty with sufficient clearness; secondly, they do not *feel* the obligation to do it with sufficient force." And he continues:

"The commonest opinion is disposed to lay most stress on the latter, the defect of feeling or will, and even to consider the defect of intellectual insight as having comparatively little practical importance. It is not uncommon to hear it said by preachers and moralizers that we all *know* our duty quite sufficiently for practical purposes, if we could only spur or brace our wills into steady action in accordance with our convictions. And it is no doubt true that, if we suppose all our intellectual errors and limitations to remain unchanged, and only the feebleness of character which prevents our acting on our convictions removed, an immense improvement would take place in many departments of human life." But other inevitable results of such a change would constitute serious and substantial drawbacks. We recognise the dangers of fanaticism; a "fanatic" is one who resolutely acts up to his convictions when they are opposed to the common sense of mankind; if, therefore, intellectual error remains unchanged while feebleness of character and weakness of will to do duty are entirely removed, fanaticism must increase. "We must also suppose an increase in the bad effects of more widespread errors in popular morality, which are now often prevented from causing the full evil which they tend to cause, by the actual feebleness of the mistaken resistance which they oppose to healthy natural impulses." The opposite view is therefore held by some—that

it is chiefly important to remove the intellectual source of error in conduct, that what every man really wants is his own true good, if he only knew it. But this view also is too simple and unqualified, since, "in the first place, a man often sacrifices what he rightly regards as his true interest to the overmastering influence of appetite or resentment or ambition ; and, secondly, if we measure human well-being by an ordinary mundane standard, and suppose men's feelings and wants unaltered, we must admit that the utmost intellectual enlightenment would not prevent the unrestrained pursuit of private interest from being sometimes anti-social, anarchical and disorganising. Still, allowing all this, it seems to me not only that a very substantial gain would result if we could remove from men's minds all errors of judgment as to right and wrong, good and evil, even if we left other causes of bad conduct unchanged ; but that the gain in this case would be more unmixed than in the former case."<sup>1</sup>

On the religious side we are apt to assume that by doing what he thinks right a man always obtains greater light, or renders himself more open to such enlightenment. But we have already seen that such is not necessarily the case ; for he may be serving the devil when he thinks he is doing the will of God, and so inevitable is the ill consequence of wrong-doing that it obscures the moral vision even when—or, perhaps, more when—it is done in genuine mistake for righteousness. As is said in the Fourth Gospel, "he that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine" ; but in the same Gospel we are told, "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service," implying that to think we are doing God's will, and to do it, are not the same thing. There is an objective standard of right. It is the doing of God's will, whether we think we are doing it or not, that alone puts us in the path of further enlightenment.

It is entirely necessary that we should each strive to do what we think right, but we should not be satisfied with that. It is only the beginning ; aspiration

<sup>1</sup> *Practical Ethics*, H. Sidgwick, pp. 83-86.

should go beyond, because, if we admit that the word "sin" may be applied to all those states and actions of the human mind which do not conform to God's will, we must admit that conscious transgression or moral failure is not co-terminous with sin. Unconscious sin is universal, not only in primitive, savage, pagan or irreligious men, but in man when highly moralised and evangelised by the Christian tradition. There is an objective standard of right, but we are not yet able to see its full beauty and splendour. Yet its violation grieves God, insults His holy purpose, is detrimental to us, and is sin.

If this be a true account of sin, what is efficacious repentance?

#### WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is necessary to all progress. This is as true in every art and science as in morals and religion. *Metávoia*, or change of mind, is necessary in all things, at all times, and in all places, wherever a human being endeavours to improve the thought that moulds practice in any field of activity. Something in the past way of looking at the thing in hand, whether it be little or big, must be corrected if advance is to be made.

The psychological necessity of a change of mind for all advance is habitually overlooked for want of analysis. The scholar, for example, will be found to be always following a new light if he is in the way of making anything of his scholarship and is not a mere hack. The true artist begins his work each day with some "newness of life." He is always subject to new light, not only on the inward vision he is trying to express, but on the way to express it. Even at the zenith of his power he is never satisfied, and he is always discovering, in small things or great, new causes for his failure, which he hopefully removes. The so-called artist who is a copyist or hack has none of this experi-

ence ; his vitality runs low ; he produces nothing of worth ; to him it is a matter of mere will. He whips himself up, if need be, to his daily task without a new idea about it.

Now, if we open our eyes, we see this distinction even more markedly in the cultivation of the art of living. Certain people are always discovering the causes of their failures and successes—little and big—living, not by a mere effort of will, but vitally attracted by the better plan of dealing with their own powers, and with men and things, which is constantly unfolding itself. Further, while inborn genius in scholarship and the arts is rare, faith in the indwelling Christ opens to every man, if he will enter it, a life of constant renewing of the mind in the difficult art of living. The Divine wisdom provides just that sure, clear insight into the better possibility, that daily and hourly increase of power, which gives new outlook, new insight, the constant change of mind, necessary to progress. At certain crises of life, when the wrong way has long been followed, this enlightenment comes with overwhelming force, but it seems to be the same in kind as the daily renewing.

Let it be freely conceded that enlightenment as to the right is not virtue if it merely comes to the soul as a reasonable conviction. True repentance implies a stir and spring of the whole mind. The insight, the vision, the inspiration, is the essential thing. It is the sudden chiming of a man's whole mind with God's which produces at once the inflow of new life and new light.

Repentance requires a voluntary nerving of the brain and grip of thought. This voluntary movement synchronises with some desire evoked by the perception of something desirable yet unattained, and with unrest at its lack. "Jesus came into Galilee crying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye."<sup>1</sup> A

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 15.

command obviously calls for activity of the will, yet what was here commanded was clearly no mere recognition of past sins but a change of mind, new vision. It is obvious that at the outset Jesus could not have asked His hearers to deplore their own recognised faults of commission and omission without causing their minds to be filled with the legal exactions of the only religion they knew—a prepossession which would have turned them away from the light He desired to give. He sought, not to do away with the symptoms of sin, but to strike at its root. The splendid object of desire, the Kingdom, was held up as a stimulus for voluntary and intelligent reaction, which would of necessity include the appropriate feeling. This principle was not true or valid only in the supreme religious drama then enacted in Palestine; it is true of every hour of the Christian life; and it is for lack of grasping this fact that the ineffective Church to-day misses her greatest opportunities.

The futility of dealing only with the symptoms of sin may be shown thus. It is quite impossible that any man's activity should come up to his ideal or to what he knows to be right, because the inner vision is far more swift and sure than hand or foot or habit of mind. These must lag after; therefore if we bound our horizon with that vision, and waste our energies in tears over our failure, we shall never attain it. If we have any vision at all to-day, even the smallest, we shall never live up to it until that vision has moved forward and we are seeking to live up to something beyond. It is the beauty or goodness that we see with our minds that attracts our wills; but vision to be attractive, to be true vision, must not remain the same; if it does, it is artificial and so must fail to attract. When we imagine we can do better, feel better, without any newness of thought on our course of conduct—*i.e.* if we are seeking better volition and better feeling without attention to better thought or new vision—we are on a treadmill

which is not attached to any useful machine. We get no further ourselves, nor do we improve the world. We no doubt develop certain muscles of character, but to what purpose? A great deal of what goes by the name of repentance is of this sort. There is no change of mind about it, no turning from the wrong way of looking at things to the right way; just a dull, or poignant, regret that our activity is not conformed to the vision of right that we have long had.

In this sense a man may be penitent every day, every week, concerning the same sins; and he may be exceedingly sorry, and may, by reflection, depress his spirits and those of others, and set out again with exactly the same outlook or mind that he had the day or the week before; with the natural result that his conduct, if it improves at all, improves little or slowly; or, what is quite as common, he triumphs negatively over certain faults without becoming markedly more attractive or more useful. Hence the common stagnation of the respectable life.

The thing aimed at by this sort of penitence would be morally worthless if achieved. A man who lived up to his ideal would be a mere stunted futility, perfect perhaps in the sense in which a marble statue might perfectly represent the high or low ideals of the sculptor, but, because static, failing in human goodness as much as a marble statue must fail, and as useless for the salvation of a living, growing world. We cannot justify this stationary ideal by saying that our ideal is not subjective but objective in Jesus Christ. This is ignoring the fact that a man's ideal is constituted by his interpretation of the objective goodness embodied in Jesus Christ. Our interpretation of the divine ideal may be, and constantly is, "fashioned according to this world," and we can only be "transformed into His image" by the constant "renewing" of the mind.

We are guilty in so far as we have intentionally taken the lower, rather than the higher, path. Recogni-

tion of this guilt when incurred, contrition, confession, are among the deepest and truest instincts of the soul, and are one of the most important aspects of prayer ; but they can only come healthily to their fruition when man is already living in intimate filial relation to Divine Love. This relation is well entered upon when, without bemoaning ourselves or wailing for mercy as if to a reluctant God, we give our confidence to Him as to a Father who takes great pleasure in His children.

### TRADITIONAL PENITENCE

In the past the sense of sin has often obscured the joy of repentance. In our religious literature too much emphasis has been laid on grief for past sin. Some spontaneous grief of this sort is the natural concomitant of a change of mind. The glimpse of a better way of serving God and our neighbour naturally brings with it a poignant vision of how much better we might have served in the past. There can be no question that in proportion as the change of mind and of resulting activity implies greater or lesser degrees of wrong activity in the past, the normal mind will feel a corresponding grief. The man who simply pities his own past ignorance will naturally feel less grief—"be beaten with fewer stripes"—than he who is forced to blame his own open-eyed wrong-doing and perceives that his wrong-doing gave pain to Love. What is called "the grace of God" brings a heightening of all man's powers and therefore of this grief. This ought not to be minimised. But, while recognising all this, it is also to be noted that much of our religious tradition teaches us to give a large proportional emphasis to this grief which paralyses the nerve of thought ; it teaches us that to augment this grief by fixing our attention upon the sin, and expending energy upon self-upbraiding and self-punishment, is the best way of overcoming sin. Self-upbraiding, under the titles of "penitence" and



“contrition,” is inculcated as expiatory in nearly all the modern manuals of the Church, as well as those that are time-honoured. Thus—

I recommend persons who have in any grievous way sinned or neglected God never to forget that they have sinned. If they forget it not, God will forget it. I recommend them every day, morning and evening, to fall on their knees and say, “Lord forgive my past sins.” I recommend them to pray God to visit their sins in this world rather than in the next. I recommend them to go over their dreadful sins afresh (unless, alas, it makes them sin afresh to do so) and to confess them to God again and again with great shame, and to entreat His pardon.<sup>1</sup>

It may well be said that the greatest hindrance of all to a true and lasting repentance is the want of a deep contrition, an abiding sorrow for sin. . . . Special promises are given in God’s Word to those who cherish such a sorrow as this. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted”; “Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh,” are our Lord’s own words. . . . “Oh that my hard, proud heart would melt, and that I might weep and sorrow day and night before Thee.” . . . “Look upon me, I beseech Thee, with the eye of Thy mercy, that I may see and mourn for my sins. Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me plenteousness of tears to drink.” . . . The chief of these good dispositions is a healthful, loving sorrow for past sins, springing up increasingly in the heart as the knowledge of God teaches us what still remains in the life displeasing to Him. This sorrow will continue and increase as long as life lasts; for every new thought about God casts a new light upon our sins, and gives us a truer estimate of their guilt and hatefulness. . . . Increasing sorrow is produced in us by a deeper knowledge and experience of our Heavenly Father’s love. . . . We are called upon at repeated times (Advent and Lent) to renew our acts of repentance for past sins, thus impressing upon us the necessity of cherishing the spirit of life-long sorrow for them.<sup>2</sup>

Contrition is sorrow for sin from love of God, whom sin has insulted, grieved, wounded. This is pleasing to God and obtains His pardon.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Pusey, as quoted by Rev. T. T. Carter.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. T. T. Carter’s *Manual of Repentance*, pp. 30, 31, 120, 123, 201, 202, 203.

<sup>3</sup> *A Broken Heart*, Rev. P. B. Bull, p. 9.

This teaching must, of course, be judged by its fruits in the lives of those who follow it. It is offered as a means to an end—the training of the human will that it may unite with God's will, and the resulting elevation of character and help to the world. We have, on the one hand, the evidence of many great and notable saints who exemplified this way of the religious life, with the testimony of thousands of less distinguished but saintly people who regard a life of penitence as the only adequate cure for sin. On the other hand it must be admitted that the majority of average persons who in past ages were trained in such doctrine did not hand on to their descendants a civilisation that throbbed with the love of God. When penance was offered by the Church everywhere as a panacea for the disease of sin, a penal ethic crystallised, in which cruelty to sinners was a virtue because cruelty was conceived of as an attribute of God.

It may be replied that this proves no more than that every institution of earth partly fails to effect its end. Yet the test of fruits is always a matter of proportion : how much is claimed for a method ? how much does it actually produce ? Let us take the religious orders, and, since written records have usually a strong bias of admiration or detraction, let us look at contemporary facts. If we go to so new a country as French Canada to-day, and examine monasteries and convents of which it is full, we shall find there multitudes, thousands upon thousands, who are honestly following a rule based on penitential theories, and they are producing little better and little more for the world's salvation than did people of their kind soon after the Christian era, and indeed, before it. Inspiration for the world does not come from these institutions. If we watch processions of such monks or nuns in any Roman Catholic country, where they are not a select few drawn from a Protestant majority, we are forced to observe that their faces do not, as a rule, indicate inward light. It is, I think,

false to say that these monks and nuns are not honest and earnest, but the same number of honest and earnest men of the world have a more spiritual appearance. If among such a vast host of average Christians so little has been produced along this line of devotion, it is natural to conclude that the dynamic Christian repentance that brings the Kingdom is in some way missed.

Or again, if we take the average man who becomes "a penitent" and still lives in the world, do we usually find him a conqueror, inspired by a splendid purpose which is purpose and discipline in one, leading him unconsciously to avoid all activities that do not contribute to the divine end? Does he not more often appear to be the victim of an artificial self-culture—his wing-feathers clipped into some neat and comparatively useless shape? We shall each answer these questions according to our own experience. All I would urge is that we have no right to judge this way of religious life merely by the glowing annals of certain unusual and inspired men and women who by temperament may be able to get the most and best out of a deliberately induced emotion of penitence, or may have the religious genius that can turn every doctrine or habit to the best possible account. Unless we have real evidence that constant penitential exercises produce the best fruit of righteousness in the average person we ought to question their general efficacy. We should also weigh the fact that seldom in the world's history has any one man done more to turn multitudes from vice to righteousness than did John Wesley, and in preaching repentance he laid the emphasis upon the conversion of the will, while his doctrines of "justification" and "assurance" were at variance with the doctrine of continued penitential exercises. Later evangelical revivals, and the majority of modern foreign missions, in the main accepted these doctrines, as does the Salvation Army. The preaching of them has proved to be to multitudes of people the channel of God's

power to reform themselves and send them out to sacrifice their lives in efforts to save the world. It is always difficult to assign an accurate value to facts, but there seems good reason to hold that a life of studied penitence does not incite the average man to put out his natural gifts of mind and heart to that usury which is requisite for the spread of the Kingdom.

Undoubtedly the practice of confession before a priest conduces to the building up of certain types of character, but it also has a danger not always recognised. Consider for a moment the condition of a soul that, even for an hour, thinks itself clean and acceptable to God, cleansed from sin, because it has confessed and repented of, and received absolution from a priest for, all its known inclinations toward, or lapses into, vice and ill-temper, when all the time it is unaware that its whole life is set to the purpose of opposing some of God's causes, or even slaying some of God's prophets. Is not the condition of such a soul more dangerous than a state of irreligion? Will not open sinners go into the Kingdom before such an one? Do we think that only in past ages was it possible for a man to slay God's prophets and at the same time practise a strict morality and a hallowed system of religious observances which he feels absolve him from any sin he may commit?

A little consideration will show us that much anti-social action in our own day and close to our own doors, and probably in our own lives, is based on adherence to a moral tradition which blinds us to its own limitations. To the religious mind this very limitation is constantly sanctioned by habits of repentance and confession of well-recognised sins and a belief in consequent absolution,—a process which often leaves the core of the wrong-doing untouched, and—this is the point—confirms the heart in its worship of a false ideal of God. This may, no doubt, happen when the confession is made to God alone, but the evil seems

accentuated when reliance is placed on the absolution of the priest. This danger, indeed, the best confessors recognise.

We are all guilty, more or less, of corporate sins, of acquiescence in pagan survivals in legal code and social custom which to-day make Christendom unchristian<sup>1</sup> and taint us and our homes with the inevitable taint of an evil environment. This acquiescence may take the form of culpable ignorance or mere indifference quite as often as it takes the form of complacency with an evil tradition; but whether the acquiescence be a sin of omission or of commission, it is certainly sin—sin untouched in our manuals of repentance and confession, sin unsuspected, unrepented, unconfessed, unwept. It is a sin that separates us from the mind of Christ. It is only a change of mind—the *μετάνοια* consequent upon belief in the coming Kingdom—that will avail to open the door of our hearts to God and the grace of God.

### THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH

So far we have arrived at the conception of the human soul as deeply involved in the world's sin, and before it at all times lie two paths—the one that of repentance and forgiveness, the other that of remaining non-repentant, falling short of the grace which is called the forgiveness of God. We must ask ourselves what reality is covered by these common phrases to which we are so accustomed, what these two paths mean in actuality.

Let us first consider the path of the unrepentant soul.

In this world we see that sin is followed by evil consequences. Such consequences are related to sin in the way in which throughout nature an injury to a living organism, whether inflicted by itself, its fellows,

<sup>1</sup> For illustrations, see the present writer's *Practice of Christianity*, Bk. II.

or by what we call "accident," entails evil consequences upon that organism, be it plant, animal or human, and usually through it upon other members of its species. Any attempt on the part of a living organism to act contrary to what is for it the law of its own healthy development entails such evil consequences. This is so in the physical sphere, and when we rise to any form of conscious moral wrong-doing, evil results follow in the same way. These consequences—this is the essential point—are strictly related as effect to cause, their operation is strictly in accordance with law; but that law bears no relation to what we call justice.

What we need to see clearly is that this necessary consequence of cause and effect applies to spiritual as well as to physical consequences.

It is not true faith in God which makes us refuse to look steadily at the whole of life, or causes us to hold some theory of divine providence which is in direct contradiction to all the facts that we know. It is true in this world that we reap what we sow; but it is also true that we reap what others sow, and they reap our sowing. It is an undoubted fact that however unintentional, however innocently mistaken, the sowing of bad seed may be, the crop is bad, and each vile weed goes on bringing forth after its kind.

If we look at the sin of humanity in a large way, losing sight for the moment of conscious individual responsibility, we observe that false beliefs and evil superstitions, for which no individual seems to blame, degrade the physical conditions, the bodies and minds and morals, of whole communities, and that for ages; or, again, we see the mischief begin apparently on the physical side, and plague or famine, brought on by neglect of physical right-doing, so enfeeble a community that its moral standard sinks, and its children have neither right understanding nor spiritual force.

Returning now to the influence of individual sin, we observe that the vicious man or drunkard, although he

certainly ruins his own mental and physical health, for the most part inflicts far greater suffering on his innocent wife and near relatives, and commonly imposes on his little community a coarsened environment and lowered moral standard. Sin, like disease, is infectious; sin breeds sin and the brood is prolific. The profligate's children, even if normal, are trained in a bad school. But they are not often normal; he entails on his innocent children and children's children not only enfeebled bodies but enfeebled power of spiritual resistance and spiritual insight. Moral obliquity, in a more or less marked degree, is a constantly recurring form of feeble-mindedness in the generations that spring from a bad ancestry. When we turn to observe the results of sin upon the character of the sinner, we find that whenever a man commits sin, his moral perception becomes duller, his power of resistance to evil weaker. The natural spiritual consequence is to make him morally worse. Sin unrepented of is persisted in and slowly produces inevitable and cumulative moral disaster to the sinful soul.

Thus we can see even upon this earth that the evil results of sin are in themselves hellish. We are not speaking here of those conventional "sins" which may be invented by false standards of moralists and pietists; we are speaking of those actions which war against man's truest social and religious life. All experience, all scientific analysis of experience, shows that from the law that governs the healthy development of human nature manward and Godward the individual cannot swerve without dwarfing and deforming his own soul and injuring humanity in this life.

If we believe in immortality, and that human character in its next stage is in any sense a development of what it is in this, a glance will show us what the natural result of unrighteousness would be when projected into the next life; for the human spirit is essentially gregarious. Groups of the unjust—the

characters in which the love of evil predominates—would be attracted to, and surrounded by, companies of the unjust. In such companies there would be no true friendship; the more gregarious the spirit, the more solitary. The unjust spirit unjustly treated by all associates would become more unjust. The natural classification, like to like, would intensify both the sin and its natural dullness and stupidity.

### DOES GOD PUNISH SIN?

Punishment in ordinary language implies the imposition of a penalty on account of some conscious offence committed by a responsible agent, and the justice of the punishment consists in the extent to which the penalty is proportioned, on the one hand, to the enormity of the offence, and, on the other, to the degree in which the offender was fully conscious of its nature and fully responsible for it. We have seen that the greater part of the evil consequences which follow sin, and especially the greater pains which those consequences involve, are not related to the sin in the way in which the sentence of a judge is related to the crime. These consequences fall largely upon the innocent, and they are the inevitable result of wrong-doing, whether the agent is responsible or irresponsible, whether he is aware of his sin as such or whether he calls it righteousness. The only consequence of sin which has any direct and proportionate relation to the guilt of the agent is the fact that he becomes more sinful. This greater liability to sin and insensibility to righteousness is the only consequence which may be considered as directly and proportionately related to the offence as a judge's sentence is related to the crime. If we cannot find in our hearts the power to attribute this sentence and this penalty to God's will, it must be admitted that, so far as this life is concerned, there is no evidence at all that God does punish sin. All our evidence goes to prove



that, in this universe, evil produces evil. There is no evidence to suggest that the results of evil are more in accordance with God's will than is any initial crime, no evidence at all to show that specific misfortunes are to be regarded as God's judgments for sins committed ; for these are natural consequences and fall alike upon innocent and guilty. For example, the nations of a continent may be controlled by governments which exist in anti-social relations to one another. These governments may heap up armaments, heap up jealousies, envies and distrust of one another. No special statesman may be specially to blame for the international relations of these governments, in fact the responsible statesmen may be doing their best according to an unchristian but almost universal standard of right and wrong, yet the inevitable result of their united conduct will be war. The miseries of the war will chiefly fall upon millions of the peasant or working classes. Innocent women and unborn children will suffer privations and oppressions, years of hopeless and helpless poverty, even when they have escaped the fiercer cruelties and degradations of the field of conflict. Thus, to call such a war a judgment of God, meaning, as the word does, that God deliberately passes this sentence upon those who suffer by it because of His anger against the sins that have brought about the war, is to attribute to Him what in any human being would be the most gross injustice, the most pitiless cruelty. If the doctrine of the Incarnation has any ethical meaning for us, it teaches that God has chosen that we should apply the standards of human goodness to His character as far as we can apprehend it. We are, therefore, bound to reject the traditional doctrine, as old as Job's friends and still vigorous, that such disasters represent God's will for man.

We are thus brought up against the question, "Does not justice demand that God should punish the wicked?" This question cannot be answered without considering

the popular conception of the theory and purpose of punishment. Such an examination will reveal a confusion with regard to two things : (*a*) the place and purpose of the element of pain, which is one of the inevitable and natural consequences of wrong-doing ; and (*b*) a primitive and crude conception of justice. Justice appears to be thought of by the majority as a mechanically conceived balance between crime and pain. So much pain is thought of as cancelling so much wickedness. It is often said, "Such an one has sinned, but he, or she, has suffered," with the implication that the sin is therefore blotted out. Where pain does not obviously and immediately occur after crime, it is supposed to be the duty of the righteous neighbour to inflict it legally, or otherwise, by evidences of contempt or ill-will. Justice and mercy are thus necessarily thought of as antithetical principles, which in any given case cannot be reconciled.

Historically, we observe that the blind instinct of human wrath has always called for unlimited vengeance against a fellow-being who commits an injury. Very early the primitive community found it necessary to limit this. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" was a great limitation imposed by the moral sense of the community upon individual vengeance. Thus, probably, arose the conception of the balance between crime and pain as the type of ideal justice ; and from this it became natural that justice should be conceived of as vengeance, but as a mercifully limited vengeance. This conception of justice underlies all the varying references to justice in the writings of the Old Testament, *e.g.* "Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord."

With the progress of thought it was gradually recognised that if A puts out B's eye, the result of putting out A's eye may well be to leave A and B in as bad, if not a worse, condition of enmity, and to leave the community with two half-blind men instead of one,

and the partisans of both A and B in a condition of futile animosity. All that has been accomplished toward establishing a principle of justice has been that the community has expressed moral disapproval of A's crime.

It is imperative that a community has some expression for its moral sense. Right thinking and right speaking propagate virtue and supplant vice. Hence a civilised society must speak clearly and strongly on moral questions to the extent of its moral insight. Until recently, condemnation and punishment have been the one language in which the civilised community spoke out its collective judgment against wrong. Good has often resulted from such expression. Instances could be quoted in which repression of some crime or vice by severe punishment has led to the enlightenment of the popular mind as to the heinousness of the offence. But we must not argue from this fact that the spiritual force behind such corporate moral judgment might not find a nobler and therefore more effective expression.

The business of a community is not only to express certain moral judgments upon certain particular sins, not only by deterrent penalties to secure its members against certain forms of physical violence and in the enjoyment of their own material possessions ; it must also seek to reform its offenders, and to educate all the members of its society to a self-respecting and other-respecting social life. Its business is to train its members to a beneficent social life, and so to adapt its penal code that anti-social tendencies may be seen in their true light. For example, a society which had men hanged for sheep-stealing sought to secure the material property of the farmer at the expense of fostering in the whole community a conception of the worthlessness of human life which was bound to react with appalling consequences upon the moral standard of the whole community. The same may be said of every penal code in which

legal cruelties are upheld as a cure for crimes which are the outcome of human impulses much less morally bad than the impulse to cruelty. All legislation which tends to make men believe that material property is more sacred than the health and education and happiness of the men who work to produce it, must of necessity produce anti-social results, which will ultimately render its very foundations insecure. Justice, then, seen in its true light, must seek to educate the whole community to a high social ideal. Seen thus, justice and mercy will be found to be not antithetical. It is most important that we should consider this carefully in its relation to our conception of the justice of God, and that we should remember that much of our traditional teaching concerning the Divine justice comes to us from ages in which men sought to interpret even the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ by *a priori* theory rather than by patient observation of the facts of life and what it is that really makes men better and what it is that makes them worse.

With increase in psychological knowledge and more complete analysis of social and anti-social processes, our belief in the moral value of penal suffering has been greatly modified. Consider the following cases. Here is a young mother with her little ones about her. She understands how to manage her own health, and consequently has an even temper. She is well trained in the science of the kindergarten and the school. She trains her children to be obedient and companionable without whipping them. Next door to her is another mother, overworked for lack of knowing how best to work, and with nerves strained to the breaking-point. She has no knowledge of child psychology or of methods of arresting and training the child's attention. She brings up her children to be obedient and sociable by a conscientious effort to be what she calls "just" in her punishments. In a third house we find a mother with no moral force at all, who spoils her children

by indulgence and indifference, and they grow up to swell the criminal class. These households represent in epitome child education as we see it before us to-day. The children of the second mother are frequently whipped, not on account of their own naughtiness, but because of her ignorance of how to train them and her lack of serenity. The children of the third family are cruelly punished by society when they grow up because of their mother's carelessness and non-moral training. Can the punishments in these two cases be a parable of God's method of dealing with men? Because the redemptive force of the first mother's method is an unfamiliar idea to most of us, and so untried by the majority, and because the punishments of the second mother carry with them a certain redemptive force, are we justified in concluding that the methods of the second mother are the more accurate reflection of the Divine mind?

Take, again, what we have learned in recent years of the young criminal. In the most enlightened communities he is now at once welcomed into a little society in which he is given happy conditions, a choice of attractive occupations, a good and kindly education. He finds himself one of a community to which responsible self-government is accorded. The first rule of such institutions is that the crime that brought the boy to the place is never spoken of. All that is at first done for him is done with the express object of making him forget that he is a criminal. I was once spending the day at the "Boys' Farm" which takes the young criminals from Montreal and Quebec. We had seen the boys rush out from school in tumultuous joy for a swim in the warm river, and return laughing and romping to an ample tea, when in the distance along the white road from the station loomed the burly form of a policeman leading by the hand a small, ragged figure. The Governor met the child first with a smile and a welcome, as if he were

an expected guest. There was no ceremony, no word of reproach or warning. This welcome to a happier life was the official act of a law that had once been merely penal. The results from such institutions are so good that no one who has known them would be foolish enough to go back to the old method.

With older criminals, children of a larger growth, the world has been much slower in attempting to apply the corrective quality of mercy and trust and goodwill, and the consequence is that experiments in this direction are so new that the only astonishment is, not that in some cases inexperienced efforts have met with partial failure, but that the results have been so markedly good. In the United States the owner of one large factory has gone out of his way to engage discharged convicts, giving them excellent wages and putting them in the charge of a small staff employed to help, encourage and advise them without espionage. They were treated exactly as if they were respected members of the community. In several cases they rose rapidly into positions of trust; and, although there have been some individual failures, when the experiment was reported by the *Philadelphia Ledger* in the spring of 1915, no one connected with the experiment was at all discouraged, but rather enthusiastic as to the outcome. Other efforts to carry goodwill and fellowship into the prisons themselves, to treat criminals with trust rather than distrust, to give them good conditions and all possible liberty and a share in the profits of their own labour, have met with a degree of success which proves to any candid enquirer that these efforts are directed along the right line of progress, and are only the beginning of a great reformation, and this in spite of the fact that the self-righteous members of modern society are busy, as the self-righteous have been busy in all ages, endeavouring to decry whatever appears to transgress the traditional morality and howling aloud for sacrifice rather than mercy.

The truth is, this new way of moral expression involves a new attitude of mind, as is proved by the very fulminations launched against it by men otherwise excellent. The main differences between the new mental attitude and the old are : (1) The wrong-doer is considered, not as merely an offender, but as the concrete whole he is, a person of mixed vice and virtue in a mixed world, sinned against by society and circumstance as well as sinning against God and man. (2) It is recognised that if he is to receive justice at the hand of men, he must be rewarded for all his good, as well as punished for his evil, deeds. (3) It is recognised that his personal initiative (which need not be minimised because it is not exaggerated) can be most easily guided by giving him a sense of security and then directing his attention to truly desirable objects. (4) When the wrong-doer is studied and dealt with in this way, a friendship springs up between him and his reformers ; they no longer even desire to ostracise him.

From this brief consideration of the subject three conclusions arise :

(1) We are only beginners in a new science of social moral expression.

(2) Its study involves a new attitude of mind toward wrong-doers.

(3) And involves also a new attitude toward the theology and devotional literature which come to us through generations of men on whom this new social light had not forced itself.

If, then, the reform only recently begun in the methods of child education and in our penal legislation is an evidence of God's Spirit working in the world, we do ill to perpetuate a doctrine of God's penal code for humanity which, judged by the mind of the plain man, is more cruel and more unjust than methods of education and penal codes which we ourselves are discarding.

The problem of evil remains unsolved, but if we

believe the great and far-reaching fact of human sin to be inimical to God's will, there is no further difficulty in believing that pain and disaster and all that we find associated with wrong-doing is also inimical to God's will. It is difficult for reason to reconcile the sufferings and catastrophes of life with a belief in a beneficent and ever-watchful Providence, but the worst possible way of attempting thus to reconcile them is to regard them as God's punishments, sentences that He passes upon humanity because of His wrath against sin. It is well also to notice that such a method of reconciliation is in direct contradiction to our Lord's teaching.

In our Lord's day the best religious minds either regarded calamities and diseases as God's judgments and punishments for sin, or else they regarded them as specially arranged and inflicted by Him upon the good as purifying chastisements. But we know that our Lord did not think that diseases or manias or persecutions were of God's sending. He attributes them to the powers of evil or to the world. He is said to have referred to the hour of His own trial and execution as "Satanic," "the hour of darkness," "the coming of the prince of this world." The chief burden of the world as He knew it consisted, as it now consists, in the active wrong-doing of those who have power to oppress, in the neglect of new light by the religious, in the indifference of the multitude to the suffering of others; yet these, with all their terrible results upon the needy and the innocent, He distinctly did not believe to be of God's providing, but to be the work of the powers of evil. In this view of life He either fell below or rose above the best thought of His own day. In His recognition of a great force of evil inimical to God, He either descended to the level of the vulgar mind, which had developed a Dualism along the line of the superstitions of early animistic ages, or with keen intuitive vision He saw further into the true character



of God's providence than any of His religious contemporaries had yet seen.

If we have any true report of the sayings of Jesus, we see that He was deeply impressed with the sequence He observed in natural processes—the inevitable results of sowing the right or the wrong seed, the inevitable sequences in that most variable of all things—the weather, the inevitable results to be expected from the corporate condition of the public mind and public activity, which He called “the signs of the times”; and it is evident that He believed that beyond this earth the souls of the dead were subject to the same inevitable sequence. “Satan,” “the devil,” “the devils,” and the souls of men after death figure in His speech as subject to the same laws of cause and effect. The house that is built upon the sand falls. As long as a man remains unforgiving he remains unforgiven, akin only to wrath within and without. In the parables of the tares, the drag-net, the sheep and the goats, we have what may well have been pictures of that instinctive separation which is seen by those who can see to be always taking place between those who have the elements of heaven in their hearts and those who are inwardly developing hell. Dives, who could be benevolent only to the brethren of his father's house—the members of his own family, of his own class, perhaps of his own nation—belongs to the latter class. The calamities of life are, in the end and in the bulk, the same for all. There is no special judgment upon the Galilean worshippers whom Pilate slew, or upon those crushed under the Tower of Siloam. There is no attempt to explain the problem of evil; all that is explained is the way of escape. The work of God in man's salvation, physical and spiritual, is always waiting upon man's faith, in order to be made manifest, but men are not born blind as a punishment for sin.

We shall all probably admit that the disastrous results of sin are most clearly seen by those who

are endowed with the clearest spiritual insight. The common mind often fails to observe the true incidence and extent of these evil consequences, but I, personally, believe that our Lord, with supreme spiritual insight, saw more clearly than we can the appalling thoroughness of the working of the law of sin and death, and that in so seeing He could never feel anything but intense pity for the sinner *qua* sinner, that He did not, as a matter of fact, desire to add to these consequences by the pain of any other or further punishment. If this be so, we must each decide for ourselves what attitude toward the sinful soul we believe to be compatible with the love of God.

#### THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

“The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death.” What is this law, and in what sense may we believe that it is summed up and mediated to us in our Lord Jesus Christ?

We can see, as far back as we have any knowledge of the history of the world, that a law of righteousness and life has always prevented, environed, and limited the processes of evil. Blight, disease and transgression of natural law have always been dogged, surrounded and assuaged by a tendency to revert to law-abiding and health and good development. In the remote past animal affections sprang up thicker and stronger than animal antagonisms. If it had not been so, death would have swept the globe. The young and the tender could never have lived if mere competition had held the sceptre. Parental devotion cradled animal life, and love triumphed over the forces of death. Humanity sprang into development full of sin but also full of goodness, beset behind and before with the attractive results of a good life. Everywhere we see the choice between good and evil left to man, and victory dependent on his initiative. God’s omnipotence does not consist in

making man a pawn and forcing him to goodness; but visions of justice and dreams of wisdom have haunted our prophets and heroes in all ages, and everywhere we see that the spirit of life manifests itself abundantly in health and happiness and social virtues, and in sober steady human goodness, wherever and whenever humanity has followed the natural laws of its own healthy development.

The antidote to disease is the abundant life that causes the human generations to revert to health when any evil conditions that have caused disease are removed; and the antidote to sin is not pain, but the spirit of goodness and righteousness which manifests itself whenever man, weary of transgression, seeks to follow the law of his higher nature. All the good that man has enjoyed, all the good that he has achieved, all the effort after righteousness that he has transmitted to his descendants, every healthy and happy or noble impulse of human nature, comes from his co-operation with the Spirit of God; for the law of the spirit of life is that so far as man does co-operate with the Spirit of God that broods over humanity, righteousness triumphs over sin, and life over death.

In the life of Jesus of Nazareth we see as in a pure crystal the whole world-drama of the law of righteousness and life overcoming the law of sin and death. In the confusion of good and evil in the world it needed a supreme degree of spiritual insight to discern what human goodness really consisted in, and what was sin; but in the precepts of the Christ we see collected the whole secret of man's real well-being and true power, the way of life which will make the individual life secure upon the rock of salvation, the way of social life which can alone bring a lasting and universal good-will to the sons of men. In His example we see that the love which must animate the life of true power, must persist in face of all possible animosity and discouragement, in the face of torture and death, and even the sense of desertion by

the God of love. In His resurrection we see that the spiritual power of the life of love is not bounded by this life; the splendid outburst of the power of the risen Christ that was seen in the joy, the power and the rapid multiplication of the early Church and the final Christianising of Europe, is material evidence to us, who are material creatures, that the law of the spirit of life, as exemplified in the ardent love of Christ, does indeed triumph over the law of sin and death. It remains true that Christendom has only half believed the precepts of Christ, with disastrous results. But the collapse of our present civilisation as the direct consequence of the survival of unchristian standards of national and international morality is revealing to greater numbers of men that it is only by abiding in the law of the spirit of life and love in Christ Jesus that men can be made free from the hideous law of sin and death, and only under this law can the individual build his house in security and the nations of the world find peace.

Do we see in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ anything to suggest to us that sin and its awful results can be undone by any other force in earth or heaven than the working of goodness in the soul that has sinned?

We have been considering the case of the human soul deeply involved in the world's sin and choosing at every moment between two paths, that of repentance and forgiveness and life, and that of non-repentance which we have seen to be the path of death. We have seen that repentance is the glimpse of a higher life, a desire for this life, and a stir and a spring of the mind towards its discovery and attainment. This attitude of the mind is itself prayer, perhaps unconscious, perhaps consciously addressed to God's attribute of wisdom rather than to His personal love, but in any case it is a prayer of faith, for it brings to man the help of the Spirit of Life. In the normal man, however, repentance is combined with the pain of self-disapproval, and an ardent cry to

God for forgiveness and help to reform. Our question is, What in actuality does this pain of self-disapproval, this cry for Divine forgiveness, accomplish?

Can God put away the consequences of sin, and, if so, by what process is this accomplished? As far as the evidence of this life is concerned, it is obvious that pain does not cancel sin, that nothing but the righteousness of the sinner cancels his sin, nothing but turning round and being good can save the sin-deformed soul. The results of being good are as inevitable as the results of sin, and they are stronger and of quicker growth.

What then is forgiveness?

### WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

If language means anything, if we have any true record of our Lord's teaching, He certainly taught that the prayer of repentance brings a full and free remission of sins by the forgiveness of the Father in heaven. What did remission involve?

Most people will agree in thinking of forgiveness as a restoration to some relation which existed before the offence was committed. Forgiveness is not the overlooking of an offence, or indifference to it. It is often the best way for us to overlook offences, but that is not forgiveness. Again, forgiveness cannot be the remission of penalty, because friend can forgive friend, child can forgive father, wife can forgive husband, when there has been no thought of inflicting penalty. A penalty may have been proposed for any offence, and, as a consequence of forgiveness, may be remitted, but that is an accident, not of the essence of forgiveness. The natural reaction against an offence in any normal person is a change of relation toward the offender; forgiveness is the restoration of the former, or normal, relation.

What is humanity's natural relation to God? Is it described in that line of the pagan poet endorsed by St. Paul—"In Him we live and move and exist"? Is it

described in the poem of Eden? Did the author of the Twenty-third Psalm describe it under the figure of sheep in the pastures of the shepherd? Did our Lord describe it when He spoke of the abundant life lived by birds and flowers, care-free in the provision made for them by God? Is it suggested in the figure of baptism, in which the washing away of worldly stains leaves the life open to God's grace? Is it shown forth in the Eucharist, in which the soul feeds upon the Divine life?

We cannot believe in God and believe less than this. The church, implicitly if not always explicitly, teaches that man only truly lives when he lives in God, that the Divine strength is the proper food of his soul. If this be so, God's forgiveness is an inflow of goodness into the forgiven soul. The sin of humanity is the abnormal thing, the barrier raised against the Divine life. Repentance tears away the barrier on man's side; God's forgiveness is the restoration of the spirit of goodness in the heart.

The problems that arise about the justice or possibility of forgiveness seem to arise from notions of man as independent, from an isolated conception of God, and also from the idea of something static in human relations that is not consonant with the constant change caused by growth and development. It is argued, for example, that if one man injure another, the deed must carry everlasting consequence. But if repentance enable the offender to do his victim a greater good than he did injury, that also carries everlasting consequence; and what is important is that, through the process both souls are in constant growth and development reacting to one another. They are neither of them the same souls at the end as at the beginning. The result of the first injury cannot be called good, because if the offender had been from the first a benefactor instead of an offender, a greater good would have resulted; but the result of the offence plus the greater benefaction may be much better than if the relation between the two men had

been one of mere neglect, the absence of either good or evil.

This much is often admitted when injury and benefaction are material, and when it is possible to confer the benefaction on the person injured ; but when the injury is spiritual, not material, or when it is impossible to benefit materially those whom we have injured, it is argued that there can be no reparation. But if other postulates of the Christian religion are true, human souls have access to one another through the Divine Spirit. It is probable that they react to one another under the influence of the Spirit, whether they know it or not, and that the influences set at work by the offender's prayer of repentance bring to the injured a good incalculably greater than the harm of the injury. Nothing is irrevocable except the loss of the prayer and thanksgiving on behalf of his fellow-creatures which ought to have been going on all the time, before the repentance took place.

If penalty could in any way cancel offence ; if the offender, as time passes, remains the same man who committed the offence ; and if forgiveness were mere remission of penalty ; then forgiveness between man and man, and also between God and man, would be unjust. But these are large assumptions. We have not the slightest evidence that anything but benefaction cancels offence. We have every evidence that no human soul remains in the same relation to God or man for even an hour. And if we believe that human souls react on one another through the medium of the Divine Spirit, we have good reason to hope that if the prayer of repentance be hearty and entire, it will enable the Divine Spirit to invade the victim's soul and cause in him a good disposition that will more than counter-balance the offence, even when no material reparation can be made.

Into what depth of reality, unplumbed by our material minds, do our Lord's words about forgiveness

lead us? His insistence on the necessity of a forgiving spirit in the forgiven is distinctive of Christianity. His constant coupling of it with God's forgiveness can hardly be explained if there was not some necessary connection, or if the two together were not necessary to the saving of the soul, and hence of the world. Forgiveness is so difficult to man that it implies all lesser graces of neighbourliness. But if God's forgiveness of man does not mean an inflow of the Holy Spirit, how could it imply in man the power to forgive? It is man's responsibility to use and foster the new influx of goodness in his soul, but the influx must be a great reality or the two things—man's forgiveness of man and God's forgiveness of man—would not be interdependent.

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, then your heavenly Father will forgive you: but if you do not forgive men, your heavenly Father will not forgive you."<sup>1</sup> And this is illustrated by the parable of the two debtors, where the potentate is represented as essaying forgiveness which is shown to be impossible unless it produces a forgiving spirit in the forgiven.<sup>2</sup> The two taken together seem to teach that the forgiving disposition is the proof of the soul being Divinely forgiven. For our Lord often speaks of God's action as future when it is evidently past and only the outward proof or human consciousness of the action is in the future. It is worthy of note how often He couples forgiveness and fresh grace. "Therefore I tell you that many as her sins are, they are forgiven, for her love is great. Whereas he to whom little is forgiven has but little love."<sup>3</sup> It would appear that those whose little love shows them to have received little forgiveness are still bearing the miserable results of their own hardness. More love would show that more of God's forgiveness had flowed into the soul. Again, we have forgiveness coupled with heightened physical vitality: "Which is easier, to tell the paralytic,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xviii. 24-34.

<sup>3</sup> Luke vii. 47.



Your sins are forgiven, or to tell him, Rise, lift your pallet and walk?"<sup>1</sup> Here the inflow of God's Spirit in forgiveness is manifested in elevation of the bodily health. Then again, in Mark iii. 28-29, and Matt. xii. 31-32, it is shown that where the soul is closed to the influence of the Holy Spirit of goodness by the blasphemy which calls good evil, forgiveness is for ever impossible.

It would seem from all this that virtue goes out into the soul with forgiveness, that God's action in remitting sin, and the renewal of goodness in man, and the outflow of God's grace to the saving of the world, are only three aspects of one thing; that love, and the will to forgive, and the discrimination of spiritual values, and heightened physical vitality, are all imparted to the soul with forgiveness.

We often fail to observe this in our daily experience because we have such conventional, and sometimes quite false, notions of what God's grace in our souls produces. We often concern ourselves legally with certain symptoms of sin, instead of with its disease at the root of the soul, whereas the disease may be healed before its symptomatic habits are cured, and some symptoms we think important may not be so. Not long ago a good woman lamented to a friend that, although for many years she had prayed for patience and self-control to do certain things she did not like, she felt no nearer this grace than at the beginning. "But," said the friend, "what always surprises me is, how you grow to enjoy doing things for your neighbours—things that any one else would consider disagreeable duties. The things you say you hate to do, and keep forgetting to do, appear to me to be silly peccadilloes that are as well left undone." The words of this careless friend brought a sudden revelation of God's love to the poor woman. She perceived that God had given her something far higher and more fundamental than she had looked for. The grace of God's forgiveness had been working in

<sup>1</sup> Luke v. 20-24.

her quite unobserved ; when she recognised it, great liberation of spirit was the result. This simple story illustrates many more complex difficulties. The grace of God's forgiveness is surely doing for each of us something much greater, more fundamental and more joyful than we, even at our best, can understand. It is only by the prayer of repentance that we can begin justly to understand and love the heavenly Father.

If there is joy in heaven over the repentance of each sinner, ought there not to be in our constant prayer of repentance a strain of joy in sympathy with the exultation in heaven ?

### SUMMARY

Sin in contrast to God's will for man is like disease in contrast to health, like discord in contrast to harmony. As is ugliness to beauty, dirt to cleanliness, error to truth, so is sin to righteousness. It is a violation of the law of our being, a violation which throws the whole order of life into disorder, and sets up a wrong standard of values for the man, the community and the race. We are all partakers in it, to some extent freely and consciously, to a larger extent unconsciously and perforce. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the measure of as much as we can understand of the nature of sin. As that foul and stupid crime, committed in the name of law and religion, stands out in contrast to the intelligent devotion men might have yielded to Him, we see in it, as in a mirror, the hideous distortion of the sinful mind which sees good as evil and evil as good.

Repentance consists of three parts—vision, self-condemnation and inspiration. (1) A fresh vision of God's will as the true vocation of the soul. This may be at a crisis of life—a vision of righteousness covering all life's activities ; or it may be at any moment—a fresh vision of righteousness in some particular. (2) A

loathing of the old way, which in contrast to the new is seen to be as a filthy garment or disease, which the soul perceives to be abhorrent to God and longs to cast off. (3) A turning of the whole heart to God with the instinctive faith that He is able and willing to inspire the soul to cast off the loathsome thing and step forward to the new.

The Cross which, as understood by the Christian, is the measure of the evil nature of sin, is also the measure of the righteousness which, in repentance, he sees to be his vocation ; for as Jesus Christ bore the Cross rather than renounce His faith in God's reconstitution of earth and the accomplishment of man's salvation, so there must be no limit to what the soul may be called to do and dare for the accomplishment of its own vocation.

The soul, seeing afresh its glorious vocation, eager to be rid of its sin, turning to God for release, finds that all things bear testimony to the law of sin and death ; that its sin has produced shameful results within its own very texture, in the habits of the brain and nerve of the body it fashions, in the evidences of havoc, moral and material, wrought by its sin on its environment. If its repentance be only partial, that is, if it be mixed with remorse, so that faith in God's power and willingness to help does not spring into full fruition, it tarries long in the melancholy region of the law of sin and death, perceiving little else than the inevitable ill-result, and moral and physical destructiveness, of sin, in whose shackles and filthy folds it finds itself. In this region of thought the inevitable anguish that sin brings upon the guilty is interpreted as expiatory, and the suffering sin brings upon the innocent is valued for its anguish and not on account of the love it often attests.

But if repentance be complete, if mind and will leap forward to the new vision, and, spurning all that contrasts with it, seize by faith upon the goodness of God, it finds that its every to-morrow is not as

yesterday ; for in receiving God's forgiveness it receives the inflow of the divine Spirit of goodness or righteousness, which becomes its very self, and brings forth good results more quickly and more powerfully than its sins bring forth evil. All things become new, itself included, and evil is overcome of good. In its vital growth it not only leaves its sin behind but also the very self that sinned. Yet the truth is at first only apprehended by faith, for the change is the work of the divine Spirit, and therefore very fundamental, very deep ; old habits of brain and nerve and of surface thoughts and feelings, may still operate. If the soul be not steady in its faith it may lose the glad inspiration of God's forgiveness and take again to tears, not knowing that the lion-like bad habits which it sees in its path have the death-sentence already within them, and must soon die.

For this lack of faith there is for the heathen great excuse, but for the Christian none ; for the Cross is the very seal and signature of God to His willingness to uplift and save, because in Jesus Christ we see one who, innocent and in anguish, bore all the extremity of man's sin directed against Himself, and yet felt nothing but the will to save and uplift ; and in that we see such measure as we can understand of the suffering which God endures by reason of our sin and the efficacy of His love in this endurance to regenerate the repentant soul. And just as the Cross is a sign set by God to prove to us His willingness to forgive, so the re-appearance of Jesus Christ and the great power with which His Spirit has ever upheld all simple souls that turn to Him is the sign to us of God's power to produce in us a new and fruitful life.

How strange to our modern ears sounds the ecstatic cry of the old Hebrew mystic, "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is" ; and yet the meaning of this cry is the same as that with which our Lord began His ministry, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand ; repent ye."



VI

PETITION: SOME THEORETICAL  
DIFFICULTIES

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## SYNOPSIS

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## VI

### PETITION : SOME THEORETICAL DIFFICULTIES

ONE is conscious of a certain inner inhibition when one begins to discuss and argue about the theoretical difficulties of prayer. It is as if one had got on to the wrong plane. "That is not the way," one hears some one say, "that the saints talk about prayer, those for whom it is not a theory, but a continuous vital experience. Logic, argument, precise statement simply miss the real thing. You can never make prayer a reality to people, never make any one want to pray, by arguing about it." All that is true, and yet I feel that if argument does not take us into the sanctuary, it may perform a humbler function in clearing the threshold. While the saints lead men by the hand into the Holy of Holies, it may be something to be even a door-keeper, or door-sweeper, in the house of our God. Whilst no removing of intellectual difficulties can create the desire to pray, the desire to pray is often thwarted by intellectual difficulties.

Objections to prayer of an intellectual kind are a real factor of difficulty in many people's spiritual life. If one can set these in a clear light, see just what they amount to, and leave them less formidable obstacles than before, one will not perhaps have added any force or depth to any one's spiritual life, but may have secured it more unimpeded activity. And of course it is not only



intellectual people who have intellectual difficulties. A great many of the difficulties of people untrained to think consist in more or less confused thinking. The same problems which the philosopher sets out in the technical language of metaphysics often in a crude or a dim way trouble children. I believe the intellectual difficulties connected with prayer are some of those which come up in the simplest minds.

The difficulties I mean are connected with prayer as *petition*, asking the Ruler of the Universe that something which we want may take place. There is one way of escape from these difficulties which I find people disposed to take nowadays and which seems to me quite illegitimate. It consists in ostensibly eliminating the petitionary element from prayer. "True prayer," it is said, "is not the offering of our desires to God; it is an act of acceptance of the Divine Will. We believe in prayer, but not in petitionary prayer." Petitionary prayer is treated as a concept belonging altogether to a lower stage of spiritual advance, a relic of the magic of primitive man, which ought to be cast off when we come to more mature conceptions of what God is and man is. This way of escape, as I have said, appears to me quite illegitimate. *Prayer is by the very definition of the term petitionary*: what it means is asking that something we desire may take place. It is not, as is pointed out in Essay VIII. of this book, the whole of worship. Worship includes, besides prayer, acts of adoration and thanksgiving, and acts of acceptance of the Divine Will. Prayer is just *the petitionary part of worship*.<sup>1</sup> To speak of "petitionary prayer" is a redundant phrase; the adjective is not wanted. It is quite a conceivable position that we ought never to offer our desires to God, but only to perform the inner act of acceptance of His Will. But a person who holds that position

<sup>1</sup> The word "Prayer" is often used—in fact, it is so used in some places in this volume—as the equivalent of "communion with God" or "worship" as here defined. Modern custom allows this, perhaps, but to use "prayer" as="worship," while intending to *exclude* its petitionary sense, is in any case an abuse of words.

ought not to say, "I believe in prayer, but not in petitionary prayer," which is really a phrase without meaning: he ought to say, "I believe in *worship*, including acts of submission to God's Will, but not in *prayer*."

People shrink from saying this, because prayer has formed a regular part of the life of the saints throughout the ages, including the life of our Lord Himself. They have *prayed*, in the proper sense which that word bears in English, and which the corresponding words in Hebrew, Greek and Latin bear. *They have offered their desires to God in the belief that through their doing so things which they desire will come about.* People who say that that belongs only to a lower stage of spiritual advance find themselves in the questionable position of being superior to Christ. Could anything put the petitionary character of prayer more strongly than, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you," or than the parable of the importunate widow? And the precept of Christ is borne out by what we are told of His practice.

It must be admitted that prayer, the action of the child who goes to God and asks for what it wants, raises great difficulties as soon as you begin to think about it. I propose to discuss three of these obvious difficulties in this Essay.

(I) FIRST DIFFICULTY: WILL GOD NOT GIVE ME  
WHAT IS GOOD WITHOUT MY ASKING HIM?

One difficulty connected with the idea of prayer is that it seems to suppose in God either *a lesser knowledge* than my own of what my good is, or an *unwillingness* to give me what is good for me, *without my asking Him*. I think the fallacy involved in this objection is that it speaks as if "my good" were something fixed and independent, a solid lump, as it were,

of some material substance, like a table or a chair, which is still the same however my mood may vary from one time or another. God holds this thing called "my good" in His hand and will bring it up to me quite independently of my spiritual attitude. But if "my good" is something essentially *relative to my spiritual attitude*, if what is good for me in one frame of mind and will might not be good for me in another frame, then there is nothing unreasonable in supposing that many things which I desire would be good for me, if my being were directed deliberately towards God, as in prayer, and would not be good for me, if my being were turned away from God.

One may take the simple and obvious example of the deliverance, of oneself and some one else, from illness. It is clear that the effect of this happening upon one's inner life will be quite different according to what one's inner life has been up to that time. The deliverance would mean something different to a person to whom it came as a token of God's love and to a person who saw it only as a chance of the material world. For the first person it might be a good and for the second an evil. This does not, of course, mean that in every case the greatest good for a man praying to be relieved of an illness would be for him to be made well. In many spiritual histories a greater good for him would be his continuing to be ill. All that it is necessary to see is that cases are conceivable in which it would be spiritually good for a man to be made well if he had prayed, and spiritually bad for him if he had not prayed.

But, it may be said, my heart might surely be directed to God in an attitude of general receptivity, of readiness to accept whatever He gives as being the greatest good possible for me, without my preferring specific desires, which are necessarily determined by a dim and short view of my real needs. That is to say, it may be granted that "my good" has essential

reference to my spiritual attitude ; but it may still be questioned whether "my good" has reference to that particular element in my spiritual attitude constituted by my *desires*. My desires are no guide at all as to what my good is, as God sees it.

What this view comes to is that pleasure is not part of the good.

For it is quite certain that pleasure *has* close relation to my desires. Modern psychology, I believe, recognises that while pleasure does not normally determine my desires in so far as I do not, as the old hedonists supposed, desire pleasure but some concrete object, my desires do determine pleasure, since pleasure results from my obtaining the particular thing I desire. If then my desires are no sort of guide as to what my good is, pleasure cannot be part of the good. This is a possible view. It is the view of extreme asceticism, and extreme asceticism has had a place in some forms of Christianity. On this view my good consists solely in my moral perfection, and God, whose will is to give me my good, is interested solely in my moral perfection and is indifferent to my pleasure and my desires. It would not be a reason for Him to give me anything, that it would make me happy, but only that it would make me better.

People who hold this view are driven by the moral difficulty to give up prayer as petition, except as petition for holiness. As I rose to higher spiritual levels, I should cease to ask anything of God except to be more completely conformed to His Will : to ask God for something I desire, something the possession of which, because I desire it, would make me happy, is to show that I am still on the lower levels of the spiritual life. Probably the people of whom we spoke at the outset—the people who say they have given up "petitionary prayer" altogether—do, as a rule, allow petition for holiness, since it comes to practically the same thing as the acceptance of God's Will, and the position we have

just described as resulting from an ascetic principle of valuation is identical with their position. This position seems to me to have something of spiritual *priggishness* about it. I do not believe that pleasure is the whole of the good, not even that it is the principal part of the good. I believe that moral goodness is something of greater value than pleasure and that, where choice lies between them, to choose pleasure is to choose wrong. And yet I believe that pleasure is *part* of the good, that pleasure *is intrinsically a good thing*. And if so, then God, who, if He is perfect love, wills to give us all good, cares most indeed about our goodness, but is not indifferent to our pleasure, and that must mean He is not indifferent to our desires.

If pleasure is a good, then my desires are in some measure a true indication of what my good is. No further reason *need* be required for perfect Love to give me something than that I desire it. Of course, I may continually desire things which it would not be good for me to have because each thing I desire is, as a matter of fact, an element in a larger whole of accompaniments and consequences, and it may well be that though the pleasure involved in my attaining my desire is, taken by itself, a good thing, I should have to take so much evil into the bargain, in the accompaniments and consequences, that the total complex would be bad. A Love, which was also perfect Wisdom, might therefore very often withhold from me what I desired. In certain cases a lifetime of frustrated desires, of pain and sorrow, might to the eyes of perfect Wisdom be an element in a larger whole, which, with that element, realised for me a richer good and a fuller joy than could be realised by any whole without it. It would therefore be quite true that my desires are very imperfect guides as to what my good is, but it does not follow that in all cases the accompaniments and consequences of what I desire would be evil and, *when they are not definitely evil, or when the fulfilment of my desire would not prevent*

*a greater good, than the gratification of it would be a positive good, and God could not withhold it from me without ceasing to be perfect Love.*

Our Lord pointed to the relation of father and child in order to explain the proper relation of God and the individual man in prayer. We know that no father who cared for his child with any intelligence would grant all its desires. He would care more for his child's character than for its pleasure. Even apart from everything else, the granting of all his child's desires would destroy pleasure by satiety. And yet his child's desires would be a real concern to him. If he knew his child was longing to have a Noah's Ark but did not care for picture-books, he would not deliberately buy it a picture-book for its birthday present. A picture-book would not be a good for it. Why? Simply because it did not desire it. Its good in such cases would not be something wholly apart from its desires, but would be actually constituted by its desires.

Now it seems to me that the view which conceives our relation to God after this analogy, a relation of happy domestic confidence and frank avowal of desires, is something much truer and more natural and wholesome than the ascetic view which supposes that on the higher level of spiritual life all desires are laid aside except the one desire to be conformed to God's will. It is true that in the intercourse of father and child, the desire of a child for a particular toy might be wholly selfish and its pleasure in getting the toy quite separated from any thought of its father. But what the ascetic view overlooks is that this interplay between the child and the father of desire and gratification may itself be the vehicle of a love which infinitely transcends in value the gifts given. The utterance of the desire, the action of giving in response, may be sacramental. A father would certainly be glad to find that his child cared more for pleasing him than for any present it might get, but would any natural father rejoice to find that all desires

in his child had been extinguished except the sole desire to please him? Would not love itself suffer by the restriction, the desires of the child *for a multiplicity of objects having given Love a field* in which it could exercise and express itself? It is quite plain that we may take our desires to God in a spirit which belongs essentially to the lower level, but it seems to me that the difference of the higher level would not be that all desires had been suppressed, in the ascetic sense; desires would still be brought to God, but in another spirit, the spirit for which joy in the Love that cared for them would immeasurably transcend the mere pleasure of attaining them.

(2) SECOND DIFFICULTY: WILL GOD WITHHOLD GOOD FROM ANY ONE BECAUSE I DO NOT PRAY?

The second difficulty connected with prayer is connected, not with prayer in itself, but with one particular kind of prayer, the kind described as "intercessory." How can my prayer procure good for another man? Would God not give him the good if I did not pray? If God loves that other man perfectly, how is it thinkable that He would withhold some good from him, simply because one of his fellow-creatures did not happen to pray for him? And if God would give him the good equally, whether I prayed or did not pray, how does my prayer in any sense procure it? Is my prayer anything but an otiose accessory which might just as well be left out?

This question certainly raises a real difficulty, but when you think it out it is seen to be only a case of that mutual interdependence of finite individuals upon each other which is a fact of the Universe impossible for any one to deny. Everything I do or say has some effect or other on other people. Even my thoughts, certainly in so far as they affect my actions, my words, the little movements of face or hand of which I am not conscious, do actually influence others either for good

or for evil. There is no greater difficulty in the idea that some good which might have reached my neighbour, or might have reached the world, if I had been in the spirit of prayer, does not reach my neighbour or the world if I am in a state of spiritual inertia, than there is in the fact that people can get good from the influence of a man kindled and penetrated by the Divine Spirit which they would not get from him if he were living on a low plane. If good influence is an undeniable fact of the world, varying with the will and temper of individuals, there must be bad influence too, by as strict a logical necessity as that by which convex implies concave—bad influence, at any rate, in the negative sense that the defect of my own spiritual state implies that a particular good which might have come to the world through me does not do so. Why God has willed to work for the good of men through their fellow-men it may be hard for us to say; all we can say with certainty is that He has.

And yet it is impossible in praying for any other man or any good cause to combine the thought of God as perfect Love with the thought of God as needing to be reminded or stirred into activity by human desires. God Himself must be the original source of all "holy desires, good counsels and just works." We must think of ourselves in praying as channels through which the Divine power and grace flows. We might perhaps describe what takes place when we pray for other people by saying that the desire for their good (conceived more or less particularly according to our idea of their needs at the moment) is held together in a single mental act with the realisation of God as caring for their good much more than we do. We are not transmitting our desires to Him but entering into the stream of His desire. What we feel in loving them and desiring their good is only a faint and partial realisation, according to the measure of our small human hearts, of what God feels and wills towards them.



It may be said that this view does not make our prayer in any sense an *efficient cause* of good coming to other people ; it only means that we become more or less conscious of a Purpose which is being carried out independently of our prayer. Unless in some sense we think of our prayer as an efficient cause, as really co-operating to procure the good we desire, it would surely be impossible to feel we were doing something real when we prayed. If this is so, we must believe that in some way, according to the laws of the Universe which God has established and which, as we have just seen, involve in other departments a mutual interdependence of men upon each other, my offering to God my desire for my fellow-man's good makes it possible for God to fulfil towards that man His own eternal purpose of love. My spiritual inertia is, as it were, a dam which holds back the stream of God's grace, and my entering into the spirit of prayer sets the stream free. We know very little of the laws of the spiritual world, and it may be that no one is wise enough to say why this should be so. God has willed that men should not only be passive recipients of His grace, but active fellow-workers with Him in His purpose of love for the world. He has willed that His love and His purpose should pass through human hearts and be shown there in little finite flames of love, in broken and imperfect desires. *S' aperse in nuovi amori il primo Amore.* That is all we can say.

Of course, if for ourselves the best thing is a right spiritual relation to God, in the case of our friends too our chief desire would be that they might be conformed to the Divine Will. And it may be that when it is some lesser good which we desire for them—recovery from an illness, deliverance from some anxiety or pain or privation—our prayer operates in the first instance to adjust and strengthen and uplift them spiritually, so that those “other things” which we desire should be added unto them, become good for them as they would

not have been in their former state. This would be analogous to what our argument showed in our own case—that it might be good for us to receive certain things if we were in the spirit of prayer which it would not be good for us to receive if we were not. Or again, so far as it is true that bodily health is promoted by a mind at peace with God, our prayer that the lesser good may be granted them is perhaps in some cases fulfilled through God's work in their hearts giving them first the greater good.

If we believe that what is called telepathy, or the "transference of thought," has been proved to be a normal fact (one may say so much at any rate to-day, that the evidence has convinced many people whose judgment is worth something) then this may help us to realise that the spiritual world has laws of its own which we are only beginning to find out. But the analogy of telepathy is probably liable to mislead, if we apply it to prayer. Effective prayer for another is not the direction of any current from our mind to another human mind, not a "mobilising of force," which works like some sort of mental electricity, but a relation in the first instance to our heavenly Father and to our fellow-beings only through Him.

The analogy of telepathy might suggest that the effectiveness of our prayer depends upon our working ourselves up to a certain intensity and passion of desire. In that way it would lead us on to what is surely a false track. For there are many things which we really do desire with the best part of ourselves and yet are conscious of desiring far too feebly. It may be the spiritual good of some other person, it may be the advance of God's cause in the non-Christian world, at home or abroad. It might discourage us from praying for them at all, if we thought it depended upon the intensity and emotional force of our present desires. But if it is God Himself, with the infinite extent of His power and love, who acts, then we may offer to

Him even feeble and spasmodic desires, which He may take, as the Lord is seen in the Gospel story taking five loaves and two fishes to feed five thousand. If our feeble and spasmodic desires of to-day point in the direction of His will, the very practice of bringing them to Him will tend to make them more strong and continuous, as we enter more and more into His eternal desire for the souls of men.

It is probably a mistake in prayer, as in other parts of the religious life, to try to work up emotion. We know to how large an extent emotion is bound to fluctuate according to all sorts of physical processes in our bodies and our environment, while the harmony of our wills with God's might be continuous, but for our own fault. Emotion is a normal part of the religious life, but we had best let it come spontaneously, and, when it comes to bear us in the right direction, thank God for the wind that fills our sails.

This bears on the subject of "agonising" or "wrestling" in prayer. I take it that by this phrase is meant prayer accompanied by desire raised to the degree of pain, a consciousness of some obstruction without the removal of which we cannot find ease. I think Christian experience from the New Testament times downwards would lead us to believe that prayer will sometimes take this form in the lives nearest to the spirit of Christ. Perhaps one might find that this particular kind of emotion is aroused when a man of Christ-like temper comes into contact with some form of moral evil. A man, for instance, might normally pray for his son with a placid and happy confidence, but might meet the evil of sin in a form of new horror, if his son were exposed to some special temptation, still more if he yielded to it. It is likely that in such a case his prayer might acquire a new quality of struggle and pain.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. iv. 19). "I would have you know how greatly I strive (*ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα* ἔχω) for you and for them at Laodicea" (Col. ii. 1).

It would no doubt be a mistake to suppose that prayer must always have this quality, in order to be effectual, or that one ought to try to create the emotion deliberately when it was not there. But it would, I think, be no less a mistake on the other side to suppose that the quality of struggle and pain when it arises naturally from contact with some fresh manifestation of the evil in the world, should be considered to denote a deficiency of faith. Only in such a case, it must be remembered that the story of Jacob's wrestling with the Divine Stranger, or the parable of the importunate widow, cannot be so pressed in their details as to imply that we have to overcome by the vehemence of desire an unwillingness in God. We wrestle indeed *with God* in so far as the urgent desire is lifted up continuously to Him, and yet the desire, in the case supposed, accords with His own will and comes from Him. The Divine Will "conquers, being conquered."<sup>1</sup>

Whether we judge this painful emotion at the presence of evil, this agony to get rid of it, to be a feeling appropriate to the true view of the world, depends, of course upon whether we believe that evil is real and that the struggle with evil is a real struggle, the issue of which is a concern to God. In the "New Thought" prevalent in America, as William James pointed out in a well-known book, the satisfied and confident aspect of religion was presented, usually in connection with views as to Faith Healing, in a way which tended to put the fact of evil out of sight. In Christian Science, the extreme product of "New Thought," the reality of evil is expressly denied. I believe, with William James, that there is a fatal ignobility and poverty about such a type of religion from the Christian point of view.

<sup>1</sup> *Regnum coelorum* violenza pate  
 Da caldo amor e da viva speranza,  
 Che vince la divina volontate ;  
 Non a guisa che l' uomo all' uom sopraanza,  
 Ma vince lei perchè vuole esser vinta,  
 E vinta vince con sua beninanza.

Dante, *Paradiso*, xx. 94-99.

From that point of view one is led to believe that the agony of conflict in prayer with evil represents something in the being of God Himself. Just as, when we love some one, there is discovered to us something of the value which this human individual has for God, so in the horror caused by some revelation of evil we enter, temporarily and according to the limit of our small human heart, into the pain of God. The desire uplifted, under the stress of such conflict, to God is among the means by which God works out the magnificence of His redemption. Painful tension is the natural result of contact between a Christlike mind and certain things in this world of ours. And if a man carries the pain already there to God, his prayer, the instinctive cry of his heart, will necessarily begin on the note of agony. But this does not mean that he ought to strive consciously and conscientiously—as some do—to keep it there. Just as we believe that the pain of God is only a partial or transitional aspect of Reality, that the whole, of which the pain is a necessary part, is transcendent joy, “the glory of the sum of things,” so surely are those who are called to share the pain of God meant to enter into God’s triumph. The prayer beginning on the note of distress may end—sooner or later, if it is the prayer of faith, must end—on the note of confidence and calm. Such, if we may look at all into the mystery of Gethsemane, was the passage of the Divine-Human Mind during that momentous hour—at first the agony, and in the end the strong and victorious acceptance, “Thy will be done.”

The intensity of the desire with which we pray will surely vary according to all sorts of circumstances not in our control. The important thing is that the prayer should always be “in the name of Christ,” that is, be directed to the ends, and conditioned by a determination to use the means, which are in accordance with the mind of Christ. When a nation is fighting for great principles of righteousness which could not otherwise

be upheld, Christians not only may but ought to pray for victory, but only so far as they believe that victory would be rightly used and would result in the betterment of mankind as a whole (including their enemies) and not merely in the aggrandisement or greater security of their own people. And such prayer is likely to be effective, not in proportion to its passionateness or to the numbers who engage in it, nor even in proportion to the intensity of their conviction that their cause is right, but in proportion to their real insight into the nature and values of the principles they are contending for and to the extent to which they are prepared themselves to continue to make efforts and sacrifices for them in less obviously critical times.

### (3) THIRD DIFFICULTY: THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE UNIVERSE

We pass to the third of the difficulties surrounding prayer, a difficulty now of a metaphysical rather than moral character. This arises from the apparent insignificance of any individual in relation to the Universe. I have only to realise in imagination for a moment the contrast between my small self and the immensities of Space and Time for it to seem an exquisite absurdity that I should ask the Ruler of the Universe to adjust its working to my convenience. Of all the difficulties connected with Prayer this seems to me the least serious, because it rests upon a confusion of thought. For the large number of people, however, who do think confusedly it is, I believe, a real difficulty. I remember a passage in a writer with an anti-Christian bias, Gertrude Atherton, where she holds up to ridicule a woman who prayed to God for help and guidance in composing some article which she had to write and who believed that she got it. It appears something excruciatingly funny to Mrs. Atherton's heroine that He who causes

sidereal systems to move through the vast of Space should be thought of as collaborating with an insignificant little woman in an American town in the writing of an article for some infinitesimal group of dowdy mortals. The force of the objection lies in an appeal not so much to logic as to the imagination. One has but to realise vividly in imagination the little world of the individual and the Universe of wheeling systems, and reason will not be needed to demonstrate the incongruity discerned by Mrs. Atherton : rather it will require an effort of reason in order not to be daunted by material vastness. But we are here concerned with a difficulty, notice, which applies not to prayer alone but to *any conceivable idea of Providence*. It would apply as much to the career of a Napoleon as the life of a woman in a little American town, since in relation to the Universe and to infinite Time the whole story of mankind on this planet may appear as only a "trouble of ants." Unless the material process round me individually is adjusted by God to correspond with *my* spiritual needs, there is no reason for thinking that the material process which accompanies, and to some extent determines, the history of mankind is adjusted to further any Purpose of God for *the human race*. It would be absurd to draw any line between Napoleon and the ordinary man, above which human affairs become of interest to God, as if there were any distinction of great and small in relation to the Infinite ! If the Purpose of God *in history* requires that a bullet should not take a course a few inches to the right or left and so kill the man who is going to mould Europe, then the little accidents of *every one's life* must be part of His purpose too. It has often been pointed out, since the time of Pascal and his "roseau pensant," that the ground of the difficulty is a confusion between material bigness and spiritual value. I am told by a friend that a Scotch writer has termed it "astronomical intimidation."

A poem of Coventry Patmore's slays this spectre of the mind :

Not greatly moved with awe am I  
To learn that we may spy  
Five thousand firmaments beyond our own.  
The best that's known  
Of the heavenly bodies does them credit small.  
View'd close, the Moon's fair ball  
Is of all objects worst,  
A corpse in night's highway, naked, fire-scarr'd, accurst ;  
And now they tell  
That the Sun is plainly seen to boil and burst  
Too horribly for hell.  
So judging by these two,  
As we must do,  
The Universe, outside our living Earth,  
Was all contrived in the Creator's mirth,  
Forecasting at the time Man's spirit deep,  
To make dirt cheap.  
Put by the Telescope !  
Better without it Man may see,  
Stretch'd awful in the hush'd midnight,  
The ghost of his eternity.  
Give me the nobler glass that swells to the eye  
The things which near us lie,  
Till Science rapturously hails  
In the minutest water-drop  
A torment of innumerable tails.  
These at the least do *live* !

It is not really the notion that the Ruler of the Universe might help some one in an American town to write an essay which is comic. It is the view of Mrs. Atherton's heroine which is comic to any one who goes behind the surface appearance. It is really this view which is anthropomorphic in a ludicrous sense. For it supposes that the Ruler of the Universe is so occupied with making planets revolve round suns and the big business of the Universe that He has no attention to spare for minuter details—as some old pagan said, "*Magna di curant, parva negligunt.*" This is in effect to think of God after the pattern of the manager of a large American stores, who is too



busy to concern himself with the private affairs of the messenger boys. It imagines Him subject to the same disabilities as a man, who cannot give his attention to more than one point at a time. But even in the operations of the human mind, if we turn to artistic construction, we know that an artist is greater in proportion to the exactitude with which the minutest details are adjusted to his design as a whole. If the design is really an artistic whole, it is marred should even the smallest detail be wrong. One thinks of Browning's poem about Theocrite. It is no derogation from the divinity of God to think of Him as interested in my affairs, but it would be a derogation to suppose that any least detail was overlooked in

That Master's art, who in Himself so loves it  
That never doth His eye depart therefrom.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E lì comincia a vagheggiar nell' arte  
Di quel Maestro, che dentro a sè l' ama  
Tanto che mai da lei l' occhio non parte.

Dante, *Paradiso*, x. 10-12.

VII  
INTERCESSION

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## VII

### INTERCESSION

"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity ; for we know not how to pray as we ought ; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

THERE are times when a positive statement of belief, however imperfect, is of more value than a merely critical exposition of the difficulties of a problem. But there is great danger in such a statement unless it is combined with an appreciation of the difficulties, and an attempt to meet them. This would seem to be true of the problems of Intercession at the present day. The call to prayer sounds so loudly in the ear of the Christian that he must be prepared to go forward in the work of intercession. But unless he is continually making the effort to understand the rational basis of his activity, there will always be the danger of an increasing irrational or superstitious element in his praying, which in the end will produce a reaction, and bring into discredit the whole practice of prayer.

The present essay is an attempt to show how much of the difficulty which besets the idea of prayer arises from a neglect of the truth of the immanence of God within us as we pray, a truth preserved in traditional dogma by the doctrine of the Third Person of the Trinity, of the Holy Spirit who intercedes with our spirit. Other essays in this book deal with many of the problems which are involved in intercession,<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Essays III., VI., and XII.

here we shall as far as possible avoid the problems of the possible effect of our prayer on the order of the material universe, and of the fairness or unfairness of allowing one man's good to depend on the intercession of another. We shall confine ourselves to a problem which would remain a stumbling-block even if these others found their solution, the problem of the kind of efficacy which we desire for our intercessory prayers ; the problem raised by the reflection that there is no need to remind God of His duty to our neighbour, and that yet in all intercession we address ourselves directly to God on our neighbour's behalf. The difficulty of this problem must first be grasped, and then we may go on to state the positive belief in which, in the face of that problem, we pray. In stating this belief we shall find ourselves, I fear, passing from the language of philosophical discussion to the language of religion. It is when we try to set forth with philosophical accuracy the faith that is in us that we come to appreciate the use of the myth by Plato and of the parable by Christ. Failing the literary skill which can weave myth or parable, a writer must be content with a plain statement, always prefacing his effort with the words of St. Paul, "Now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face."

### THE PROBLEM

The question of the possible unfairness of intercession, as is pointed out in Essay VI., may be looked on as one aspect of a wider problem presented by the undoubted fact of experience that one man can by his actions influence another for good or for evil. But intercession is distinguished from persuasion or action by the fact that it is *not* an attempt to influence other people. It is an asking of God to influence them, which is, on the face of it, a very different thing. Through weakness or wickedness I may fail to influence John

Jones for good, but we cannot conceive of God as ever willing anything for John Jones but his good. Why then should we need to ask Him to give what He is already intending to give?

It is probably this difficulty which is chiefly responsible for a denial of any real efficacy in prayer for others. There are many people who are willing to admit the value to the individual of prayer in the sense of communion with God, but regard as superstitious the idea that he can benefit others by his prayers. The soul grows by assimilation to that which it contemplates, and just as by a sound psychological instinct St. Paul urges his readers to steep their minds in whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely and of good report, so whenever a man ponders what is Divine, especially if this pondering is viewed as intercourse with God, he weakens the hold upon him of what is earthly and base and grows himself more holy and divine. But it is his own soul which benefits, and not that of another.

As an attempt to meet the difficulties involved in prayer for others it has often been suggested that we should take into consideration such empirical facts of psychology as telepathy and thought transference. The theory may be stated as follows. It is an undoubted fact that the spoken word of a man may influence his hearer, but there would seem to be evidence that besides being able to communicate with one another through the medium of the flesh, it is possible for spirit to "speak" direct to spirit. Intercessory prayer may be looked upon as emitting "waves" of spiritual energy. God is always waiting to come into our hearts: it is our self-erected barriers which keep Him out. We do not need to ask Him to come in either to ourselves or to others. All we have to do is to remove the barriers which surround us, and just as the barriers fall away from us when we lift our hearts to God in prayer, so, it is suggested, the result of our intercession is that we

influence our friend to look up so that the barriers fall away from him also and God enters in to make His abode with him.

There are, however, three serious objections to this view of intercession, which prevent our accepting it as it stands as a final solution of the problem.

(1) When I speak aloud to a man it is open to him to take my advice or to reject it, to allow me to influence him or to refuse to do so. It is true that all our lives we are unconsciously influencing others and being influenced by them. But it is open to question whether a man is ever justified in aiming consciously at influencing another man without his knowledge, and without giving him the opportunity of refusing to be influenced. Such a proceeding seems to be of an underhand nature, and to be akin to the "undue influence" which may be pleaded in the Law Courts as invalidating a will. I do not wish to say that such actions are never justified. We must certainly distinguish between the practice of pure hypnotism, and the work of men and women who are convinced that by a bold but reverent use of mental suggestion combined with the prayer of faith there lies the hope of great advance in dealing with bodily disease.<sup>1</sup> But here, perhaps, the fact of disease may alter the circumstances. In the case of the mind as in the case of the body a "doctor" may be justified in curing disease by methods which are out of place when the patient is in normal health. In matters of the soul, in which we are to "judge no man before the time," the claim to use forcible influence in prayer may only escape the charge of dishonesty by incurring that of Pharisaism.

This theory, then, lays itself open to the question, How does my spirit "work upon" that of my friend when I pray for him? Either he must welcome the "spirit message" from me, or else the effect of my prayer must be to change him without his own know-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Essay XI.

ledge and against (or at any rate without the co-operation of) his will. In the latter case I am appealing not to the man's highest conscious self, but to some lower irrational part of his being, and the whole proceeding bears the taint of dishonesty ; while if we accept the former view, how can I hope for admittance where God Himself is, *ex hypothesi*, standing at the door and knocking in vain ?

(2) The suggested explanation of intercession is based upon a mistaken distinction between intercession and prayer for oneself. The difficulty of intercession was found in the difficulty of conceiving of God as needing to be reminded by a man of the wants of his friend. But it is equally unnecessary to remind Him of the wants of oneself. When we turn to God in prayer, it is to a God who can be depended upon to act towards us as one whose will is immutably set upon doing us true good. There is no need to alter His decisions as to His actions towards us, for they already include all that we can desire.<sup>1</sup>

(3) This distinction between intercession and prayer for oneself is due to a view of prayer in both cases which would not be accepted by the ordinary Christian who prays. When he prays for himself he is asking for something, not purifying himself to receive it automatically. When he prays for others he is speaking to God, not endeavouring to affect them by sending out "waves" of spiritual influence.

The point of view of the praying Christian is of importance, since it is his experience and activity which we are trying to understand. We cannot accept a description of prayer which will not be recognised by those who pray.

Their view may, perhaps, be stated as follows. When the disciples asked our Lord to teach them to pray, His answer was, "When ye pray, say 'Our Father.'" That suggestion of the filial relationship to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Essay III.



God is essential to all prayer. When a man prays for his friend he prays *to God*, the Father of both. It is to God that he speaks, and to God alone, into whose hands he places his own affairs and those of his brothers, as a child may ask his father on earth to do something for its brother. He refuses to be told that while he thinks he is speaking to God he is really, unknown to himself, exercising a subtle spiritual influence upon his brother.

This point of view is extremely valuable in that it puts out of court any pseudo-scientific account of "how prayer works" based consciously or unconsciously on an analogy from the methods of the physical sciences. The nearest analogy we can find on earth to the attitude of the man who prays is not found in the wireless operator tapping his transmitter and sending out his unseen messages, but in the intercourse of child with father, of rational soul with rational soul.

But here we are left again face to face with our initial difficulty. The child on earth asks its father to do something for its brother because the father has not thought of it, or has forgotten it. We cannot ascribe thoughtlessness or loss of memory to God.

Our problem, then, is to find a description of prayer which shall be recognisable as such by the Christian who prays, but which shall not accuse him of ascribing to God thoughtlessness, forgetfulness or a bad but changeable will. It will not do simply to tell him that since it is obvious that there is no need to stir the memory of God the real effect of his prayer is to stir that of his brother. "I am speaking," he will say, "not to my brother but to God, and any effect my prayer is to have on my brother will be *through* the action of God."

It is these last words which seem to hold out hope of a solution of our difficulty, a solution in which the true elements of both the positions discussed above may find their reconciliation.

## PRAYER IN THE SPIRIT

A solution to the problem we are facing which will give complete satisfaction is not to be expected at the present stage of human development, but the subject of prayer is greatly illuminated when it is considered in the light of a belief in Divine Immanence, and, in particular, of a belief in the indwelling of God in the soul of man. It is this truth which finds expression in the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit. However difficult the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity may appear, it is yet a guarantee of three elements in the Divine Nature, without which any conception of God would be unworthy of the name. We, like David in Browning's poem "Saul," could not accept a God who refused to share the pain and sorrow of those He loved ; but neither could we worship and put our trust in a God unless He were also truly "sitting above the waterfloods," unless in union with Him we rose above "the changes and chances of this mortal life." So we believe in the Son and the Father. But sympathy and security are not enough : unless God can inspire and enlighten us, and enable us in spite of our weakness to do His will, He falls below the ideal which our God, if He exist, must fulfil.

It was their experience of this indwelling of God in themselves which at Pentecost changed the whole outlook of the Apostles, and led to the development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is this doctrine—the doctrine of the indwelling of God in man, of God the Holy Spirit, which we must now consider, in order to understand its bearing on the subject of prayer.<sup>1</sup>

It is a well-known fact that the psychology of St.

<sup>1</sup> A belief in the Divinity in oneself is sometimes accused of being a form of Pantheism. This danger only arises if two facts are neglected : (1) that the self is by no means as yet wholly divine ; (2) that the Divine is by no means wholly exhausted in the self, or the totality of human selves. Neglect of these facts would involve the theology of the Holy Spirit in a heresy akin to "Patripassianism" in the theology of the Son. Cf. Essay I. p. 36 sq.

Paul differs from that of other New Testament writers in that he accepts a triple division of man's being into body, soul and spirit, whereas they distinguish only between his body and his soul *or* spirit. For St. Paul his "spirit" denotes not merely the higher side of a man's soul, as it exists by itself, but that faculty as it is recreated by God. "This renewed spirit is 'our spirit' and lives in communion with the Spirit of God" (Rom. viii. 16).<sup>1</sup>

Here St. Paul gives more explicit recognition than his contemporaries to the fact that there are in man spiritual powers which the animal has not, and that these powers are no fixed quantity, but reach out towards the Divine. We shall advance yet a stage further towards clear thinking if we remember that spiritual realities must not be looked upon as divisible into separate parts like material things, or as necessarily external to one another, and subject to mathematical enumeration. The connection of a man's spirit with his body is a mystery almost wholly unexplored. We speak of the spiritual in metaphors taken from objects in space, but it is surely one of the distinguishing marks of spiritual realities that they are not bounded by space. A man's mind cannot be measured in yards and inches, nor is the connection between two of his thoughts like the relation to one another of two books lying side by side on the table. We cannot, then, look on a man's soul as lying spatially "inside" his body: still less can we think of him as having a "soul" and a "spirit" lying side by side within his mortal frame. Yet there is a difference between a man and an animal, and between the man and the animal in man. There is a difference between God and man, and between the God and the man in man. Little as we can understand or define such relations, it may be helpful to suggest that as the animal life and the rational mind "co-exist

<sup>1</sup> Charles, *Eschatology*, p. 472. Cf. the article on *πνεῦμα* in Souter's *Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*.

within" a man, so both of them and the Spirit of God "co-exist within" the Christian, and that he will reach his perfection, and the whole course of evolution its crown, when he is as much transformed above the natural man by the Spirit of God, as that natural man is transformed above the animal by his rational consciousness.

Since it is only in God that we—and not we alone, but all creation—live and move and have our being, we cannot limit the action of God to the higher level of our self-conscious life. We may say, however, that it is only at this level that the action of God becomes clearly recognised as the indwelling of the Spirit of God. In the attainment of that level there has occurred in some sense or other a "Fall": man in his progress has encountered the existence of moral evil. We cannot here discuss the problem of the nature and origin of evil, but must be content to recognise that in the lower part of that mystery, man's personality, there is not merely animal life, but the "lower self," evil inclinations and evil acts of will.<sup>1</sup>

"Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have from God? And ye are not your own, ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body."<sup>2</sup> In these words St. Paul lays down the charter of man's body, enjoining the Christian to treat his body with respect and supplying for all time the motive of Christian purity. So intimate is the connection between body and soul that no man can sin against his body without suffering spiritual degradation, and so intimate is the connection between the spirit of man and the Holy Spirit within him that this degradation involves the Spirit of God. The evils which proceed out of the heart of man not only defile the man but grieve the Holy Spirit of God in whom he is sealed unto the day of redemption.

Clothing itself upon the animal life is the rational

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 431.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

consciousness, and clothing itself upon the rational consciousness, and striving against all that is evil in it, is the Spirit of God ; and so unexplored is the nature of the relation here expressed by the words " clothing upon," that it is next to impossible to say where the work of man ends, and the work of God begins. " In like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity ; for we know not how to pray as we ought ; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered ; and he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." <sup>1</sup>

The work of the Holy Spirit in the prayers of man found its highest expression in the prayers of Jesus Christ. In Him we see the complete indwelling of God in man. When He prays God talks with God, and the " reasonable soul " of Jesus rises to Heaven with the Spirit of Christ. We cannot think of our Lord recalling things forgotten to the memory of His Father. " I and the Father are One." His human soul, perfectly informed by the Spirit of God, speaks of its desires, but only as the Spirit bids. " Let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not my will, but thine." And in the power of such prayer the salvation of the world is accomplished.

At Pentecost the disciples learned in part what was that experience of the indwelling of the Spirit which their Master had known in full. Now they understood what underlay those words and deeds which had seemed to them so strange and mysterious. Now they could go and interpret to the world the life which hitherto they themselves had misunderstood. Now they had the secret of the life of Christ : and in that lay the secret of the prayer of Christ, and of all prayer.

Let us consider a man who is praying for patience. He is not to be looked upon as kneeling and looking

<sup>1</sup> 1 Rom. viii. 26.

up to a God who sits above the skies, if perchance patience may be showered down upon him like rain upon the earth. It is he, and the Spirit of God within him, who together make that prayer, and as the Spirit is God Himself (this at least is implied in the doctrine of the Trinity), and not only God Himself, but also the man's true self to which he hopes to attain, he can no longer set in antithesis the God to whom he prays and the self which is praying. He is sharing the life of the Blessed Trinity, and in turning to the God within him is wafted up on the wings of prayer to share the patience of God.

"Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The prayer that is answered is the prayer that does not merely speak, but is carried out in effort and action, which does not merely ask for patience, but seeks it and tries to attain it. But the teaching of St. Augustine rings true to experience, when he says that only in the power of the indwelling Spirit of God can we advance towards the acquisition of any virtue. The self which is seeking and knocking is the self which is becoming a particular instance of the universal Spirit of God. And so is the self which asks.

If the life of man is lived in so close and intimate a connection with the life of God, there must surely be a complete confidence between the soul of man and the God in whom he lives. This companionship and union with God is based upon the love of God : the love of God is the ground of our creation and of God's indwelling within us. He enters into tender and intimate relations with us : we are in vital union with a loving Father. It would, then, show a real lack of faith in God and be dishonouring to Him not to commune with Him about whatever may be at any time uppermost in our minds. The problem, what are the proper objects of intercession, must be treated later in this essay, but this much may be said here.

Whatever thoughts, desires, and aversions we may have in our mind, either on account of ourselves or of others, must surely be brought up to the God with whom we commune, and "talked over" with Him. In this way alone can we give Him the complete confidence which rightly honours Him, and only in this way will our thoughts and desires be purged and purified in accordance with His will.

Silent waiting upon God will thus become an essential part of petition and intercession. Here, as in all prayer, it is as important to listen as to speak. We shall bring all our thoughts, our clear-cut desires and our vague and inarticulate longings, into the presence of God, and strive to express them in words to Him. Then in silence we shall wait for the voice of the Spirit within as He helps our infirmity, and shall learn what is purged out of our prayers, and what is retained.

A man whose desires are evil will not better them by hiding them away while he prays to God for other things. If inordinate ambition, or love of money, or a savage lust for victory over an enemy possess his heart, he must bring these desires to God and put them to the test of stating them in the form of prayers. To honour God with full loving confidence demands this. And then in the silent waiting upon God the voice of the Spirit within will be heard, and all that is vain, avaricious and revengeful will be purged away. "In nothing be anxious ; but *in everything* by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God."

#### INTERCESSION

We have noticed the limitations of our thought and language by which we are led to speak inaccurately of spiritual things in words only directly applicable to objects in space. The New Testament writers, for example, often speak of the Holy Spirit as being "poured forth," and of men as being "filled" with the Spirit. These words, since words of spatial mean-

ing must be used, are no worse than others, and bear witness to the important truth that the Spirit indwelling in each soul is the same Spirit who is indwelling in the souls of all mankind. "All these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will."<sup>1</sup> The thought of "God in whom *we* live and move and have our being"<sup>2</sup> may carry us further than we expected. Not only must we attribute to Him all the good thoughts of our own minds, but such facts as telepathy and thought-transference may perhaps be looked upon, not merely as facts of experience, but in a very real sense as operations of God Himself. And if this be so, the same will be true of our most ordinary speech and intercourse. It is a great help to the preacher to imagine that his sermon is not directly addressed to his hearers but an offering to the Holy Spirit, for Him to "divide to each one severally even as he will"; and there may be a greater measure of truth underlying this imagination than we are apt to think.

In intercession we speak to God, and if our prayer be thought of as influencing our friend, it must not be thought either to impose our influence upon his unconscious self or to enter his soul where God is knocking in vain. Let us consider intercession, as we have considered other prayer, in connection with the indwelling of God within us as we pray.

Here, too, we have before us the example of Christ, in whom "dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Intercession formed no small part of our Lord's prayer. We know, for example, how He prayed for St. Peter, for His disciples and for those who nailed Him to the Cross. Now it has been pointed out that our conception of God is differentiated from one which is purely anthropomorphic by the fact that we readily ascribe to God a knowledge of our inmost thoughts which we should resent as an unwarrantable intrusion on the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 28.



part of other men.<sup>1</sup> From this it would follow that those who believe in the Divinity of Christ might be more willing to admit His prayers to their souls as "influence" than those of any other man. We should not wish to reject any influence coming from Him. But the Spirit which dwelt in fullness in Him is the Spirit which dwells in us in part, and which prompts and wings our prayers.

The life of Him who was born in Bethlehem and died on Calvary has never ceased. Christianity is based on the belief that the life of Christ was a true showing forth of the life of God, and that the very Christ who prayed on earth is alive unseen but ever near to all men. In Sacrament we are made one with Him and share His life. But even in that life there is the element of intercession. The lives of men are pondered in the counsels of the Most High—"He ever liveth to make intercession for us." It is not that Christ must stand between man and the wrath of God, but that He who loved His own on earth and loved them unto the end cannot but love them still, and, as it were, tell them over one by one, and in the power of the Spirit who dwells in Him and in them, and unites them to Him, quicken their souls to eternal life. We cannot feel any resentment at such a thought, or fear any underhand invasion of our soul. In our lives our souls are being transformed into instances of the Spirit of God, and that Spirit which dwells in us is One with the Spirit of Him who is praying. By sharing in that Spirit we share the life of Him who intercedes for us, and with Him rise into closer union with God the Three in One. It is a significant fact that in the history of Christianity the Eucharist has generally been regarded not only as a means of communion with Christ but as the great central service of intercession.

In union with Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we are in union with one another. It is

<sup>1</sup> C. C. J. Webb, *Problems in the Relation of God and Man*, p. 146 sq.

in this view of our relation to Christ and to one another in Him that the theology of St. Paul culminates.<sup>1</sup> He is dealing, as we have seen, with spiritual realities, and striving to express them in language formed for describing objects in space. He wishes to describe the relation in which Christians stand to one another through their relation to Christ. All earthly forms of association of man with man, such as the family, fail to depict the spiritual principle of unity which binds together the members of the Church, and for want of a better term he speaks, in language perhaps drawn from his Eucharistic experience, of the "Body of Christ." He speaks of Christians as being members of one Body, and calls that Body Christ. The language symbolises a deep spiritual reality. The mysterious personality of each one of us, the *self* which we so little understand, only finds the growth and development which is its true life, in virtue of its union with the Holy Spirit within us, and that Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and of God. "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me."

If this be so, then there follow two conclusions. First, our knowledge of the Spirit as working within ourselves may be taken as analogous to the working of the Spirit within others. As our spirit is being "clothed upon" by the Spirit of God, and "growing into" that Spirit, so are theirs, and what is true of our progress towards holiness through the power of prayer is true of theirs.

And, secondly, we do seem to gain a glimpse of the way in which our prayer may be thought of as helping them. We must accept in the realm of prayer the possibility of one man influencing another for good or evil, which is so clearly a fact in the realm of thought, speech and action. But if God does indeed allow us to influence one another, and, more than that, does call us in a real sense to co-operate with Him and with one

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Epistle to the Ephesians and Dr. Armitage Robinson's *Exposition*.

another in building the Kingdom of God, then we may surely believe that He calls for our co-operation in His work in the souls of men. And, indeed, it is not merely our co-operation, for in intercession as in all other prayer He Himself is active in our praying. In praying to God we are praying to Him whose life we share as we pray, and whose life is shared not by us alone but by those for whom we pray. We do seem to have found the medium through which we may influence them aright—and that medium is God Himself. As we make our prayer in the power of the Spirit, “in the name of Christ,” that same Spirit is quickened in the spirit of those we love and pray for, for “we are all members of One Body,” and when “one member is glorified all the members rejoice with it.”

It may perhaps be asked why, if God be active in our praying, we should trouble to pray at all. This difficulty is one which arises from our inability to describe the relations between spiritual entities except in metaphors drawn from spatial objects, which break down just at the critical point. The problem is concerned not only with prayer, but with our whole conception of the relations between God and man. All the evidence we have goes to show that the men who have known God best in this world attribute their good deeds to the power of God within them, while they themselves accept the responsibility for their wrongdoings. But this ascription to God of their goodness must not be such as to deny the reality of human free-will. The problem, then, is to find a description of the help of God which shall describe it as really helping, but not as impairing man's freedom. Now in the intercourse of human beings, in the influence of one man upon another, we find something of the kind. A man may be reclaimed from an evil life by the influence of a friend: he may readily admit that alone he could not have been saved, but yet he will not

accuse his friend of having diminished his freedom, or as having become good instead of him. Nor will the victory have been won without effort on his own part.<sup>1</sup>

In some such way, perhaps, we may picture our relation to God. The God who works with us also enables us to work with Him. But there is a real call for our effort and co-operation, and if we refuse to do His will, if we work not with but against Him, His indwelling power is withdrawn, and as that power is the true life of the soul, "the wages of sin is death." There is a difference between our relation to God and to any other man, for, as has been seen, He enters into our inmost heart and mind in a way they do not. We are not only co-operating with Him and helped by Him, but are growing into a union with Him so close and vital that human language fails to describe it, and in this union will be found our true and eternal life. The promise of Christ is that we shall be "in Him, even as He is in the Father."

It is difficult to find any imagery whereby to picture to ourselves the true method of intercession. To let the imagination play on the analogy of telepathy seems to me at best misleading, and distinctly erroneous unless we are very careful to remember that such telepathy is but one instance of intercourse between men carried on by the help of the Spirit of God. We may perhaps think of our prayer as the kindling and fanning of a spark within us. The spark is a spark from God's eternal flame, and itself grows into a flame, one with that flame of God which is the source of all light and warmth. Those for whom we pray are warmed and lighted by it, and in them, too, the spark is kindled and springs up into flame.

We shall do best to meditate on the prayers of our Lord during His thirty years on earth. If we try to enter into the mind of Christ as He communed with

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion of this problem, see Webb, *op. cit.* Part II.

the Father, and remember that by the indwelling in us of the same Spirit who dwelt in Him we are enabled to share that communion with God, we shall learn the joy and the power of prayer, and our difficulties will fall from us as we pray.

### THE OBJECTS OF INTERCESSION

The view of prayer which we have outlined will be found to have an important bearing on the question of the objects of intercession—what are we to pray for? At the present time this question is one which forces itself upon us. The war, besides bringing into prominence the great issues of the fortunes of the Kingdom of God, brings also its individual anxieties. Great as is our care for the coming of God's Kingdom, we have also our particular interests in the well-being of this or that individual. Can we pray for them as well as for it? And, if we pray for them, can we pray, for example, for their temporal safety as well as for their eternal salvation?

What I propose to do here is to suggest certain implications in the conception of prayer as an act in which the Christian co-operates with the Spirit who dwells in him and in all members of the Body of Christ.

From the time of Plato the relation of the individual to the society in which he lives has engaged the attention of philosophers. Our view of prayer brings us into direct contact with the problems raised in these enquiries, for we have seen that the main difficulties of intercession are caused by looking upon men as isolated individuals, and not as members of the Divine Society, the Body of Christ. So long as we looked upon men as completely isolated individuals, each able to live and grow to perfection independently of others, we could only continue intercession by a superstitious acceptance of a practice which appeared

wholly irrational. When we realise that we are members of a family and more than a family, of the one Body of which the living omnipresent Christ is the Head and vital principle, we realise that it is only in union with one another that each member can develop towards his own goal, and grow into "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

A recognition of this fact leads us at once to see that there is a fallacy underlying any view which contrasts the good of an individual member of any society with the good of that society as a whole. To ask whether a man should sacrifice his own good to the good of the community, or the good of the community to his private welfare, is to ask a meaningless question. No man could be what he is apart from the community in which he has grown up, be that community family, or State, or Church. He is what he is by being a member of those communities, and it is only as a member of them that he exists at all. And so long as a community is imperfect, no member of it can himself become perfect. The progress of the whole and the parts towards perfection proceeds concurrently, and the progress of each is conditioned by that of the other.

In a world at war such a statement may seem at first sight directly opposed to the facts. How can we say that the good of one must be the good of all, and the good of one nation the good of all nations, when nation is striving against nation? But this objection is based on a confusion of thought as to the nature of what is really good. If our conception of the good is limited to material prosperity, then it is true that the gain of one nation may be at the cost of loss by another. For the amount of material wealth in the universe is limited. If England and Germany are in truth contending for the lion's share of this prosperity, then there is no righteousness or justice to be ascribed to either side: the nations are like selfish and unruly schoolboys fighting over a piece of cake, and in so far as the war is

the natural result of nations jealously competing for material prosperity, it is wholly deplorable. But in so far as it is a conflict of ideals, the case is different. When we deal with spiritual realities and spiritual goods, it is not true that one man's gain, or one nation's gain, comes at the cost of another's loss. If the defeat of Germany will bring about the abandonment of false ideals by the Germans, and will not be followed by the appropriation of them by ourselves, then the victory of England will be for the good of both and of humanity as a whole.

A similar problem is presented by conditions of employment in a civilisation based on the search for material prosperity, and the result will be suffering for those who try to live Christian lives in an unchristian environment. It is difficult, for example, for a mother to pray for work for her unemployed son if that work can only be obtained by some other man losing his means of livelihood. In such a case it is incorrect to speak of either unemployment or the ousting of another man as a "good"; there is a choice of evils, but because one evil of two is the lesser, it does not become a good. If in an evil world we are frequently faced with a choice of evils, it does not alter the fact that a man's true good, for which we can properly pray, cannot conflict with the good of his fellow-men and of the society in which he lives.

The claim of the good of the community upon the individual is therefore absolute, for it is the condition of the good of all men, of his fellows and of himself. The same is true of the relations between smaller communities, and those larger ones which include them. The family finds its place as a community within the State, and the State as a community within humanity. And for the Christian humanity is on its way to becoming the Catholic Church of Christ. Each part can claim as a right only what is necessary for it to make its perfect contribution to the whole.

We cannot, then, claim for ourselves anything which will war against the perfecting of the society in which we live. In so doing we war against our own perfection. If the welfare of his leper community demand the leprosy of Father Damien, then Father Damien must be a leper. If the salvation of the world demand the death of Christ, then Christ must die.

What is true of one is true of all, and we cannot ask for others that which we cannot claim for ourselves. As members of a society we cannot ask for a fellow-member anything which will conflict with the good of the society, for it would conflict with his own good. That is the prayer which cannot hope to be answered, for what is true of our membership in human societies is true of our sharing in the life of God. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give *good gifts* unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give *good things* to them that ask him?"

What does it mean, then, to pray for the safety of our friend at the war? It does not necessarily mean praying for the deflection of a bullet in its course. If we believe that our nation is fighting in a righteous cause, then the triumph of our arms will be for the good of mankind, and we may rightly pray for it. But if that triumph is dependent upon the death of our friend, then we cannot pray for his life. To do so would be to pray for the defeat of the cause of righteousness, to pray against the good of one and all, including that of him for whom we pray.

But there is an alternative. Under the present circumstances the death of our friend may be necessary, but these circumstances are rooted, not in an iron law of fate, but in the wills of mankind. The wars fought out in flesh and blood spring from the evil passions in the hearts of men, and the face of the world would be changed by a change in the hearts of mankind. Such a change might bring about a righteous peace before our friend now training in England is called to take his



place in the firing line. The circumstances might be so altered for the better that the death of our friend in France is no more necessary. Had the world listened and obeyed when Christ first came forth preaching "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," there would have been no need for Him to be lifted up on the Cross in order to draw all men unto Him.

When we pray for the safety of our friend we do not necessarily pray for the deflection of a bullet or imply that we prefer his safety to the victory of our country. So long as human wills are free to shape the course of history, and in those wills is working the Spirit of God, so long can the course of history be varied and that which had seemed inevitable be inevitable no longer. And this is the very work in which we have seen that God calls for our co-operation in intercession. We are to co-operate with the God who dwells in us and in all men, and so to strive for the triumph of righteousness and the coming of the Kingdom of God. So in accordance with the will of God we pray for the safety of our friend. But only so. If the forces of evil prove so strong as to prevent such a speedy triumph of the cause of righteousness, then we, with Christ, must bear with the pain of the member for the sake of the good of the Body. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. . . . O my Father, if this cannot pass away except I drink it, thy will be done."

Why then, it may be asked, should we pray for individuals at all? If the good of the individual is bound up with the good of the community, should we not pray simply for the community as a whole, for the coming of the Kingdom of God?

Such a conclusion would seem to lose sight of a condition which, so far as we can see, is involved in our existence as finite beings. It would be open to the criticism directed by Aristotle upon Plato's sugges-

tion to abolish the family because men should realise directly their membership in the State. Men being what they are, they can only realise their unity in the larger society of the State *through* their experience of unity in the smaller society of the family. We cannot imagine the Church except as built up of individuals, and for each of us that imagination must play around the individuals he knows. The facts are the same in action as in prayer. We must all labour to build the new Jerusalem, but for the perfection of the city each must co-operate with certain other builders doing *one particular* part of the work. In a large school each master trains the boys of his own form. The English secretary of a missionary society devoted to the conversion of certain parts of Africa co-operates with men and women working in those districts, while other men stand in a similar relation to missionaries in India and elsewhere. Each vicar labours with his staff among the inhabitants of his parish, and in the united labours of all the Church grows "into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

This intimate connection of a man's life with the lives of certain other individuals is a real fact in the sphere of action. To accept the fact is a condition of effective work. And so in praying it is not *merely* because we can only pray with attention when our imagination is playing round certain things or people that we must pray for individual objects. We have a responsibility in prayer as in action, a responsibility towards those with whom we come in contact on earth, and as we turn to pray must be prepared to hear God's question, "Where is Abel thy brother?"

An analogy from the sphere of action may here be helpful. The man who refuses to do his duty to his family harms the larger community, the State, by depriving it of the perfect service which that family might have rendered to the whole body. The whole State is injured, but it is in that family that the suffer-

ing arises, and though in the course of time some other family may make up the loss, the perfection of the State is delayed, and the perfection of the particular family is never attained. And so it may be that for want of our prayers the whole body suffers, but that suffering is first felt in the person whom we have neglected.

Indeed, we may go further than this. It may be suggested that ideally God would never make any two persons exactly alike. Each individual is called into being in order to perform his own particular function in the Kingdom of God. But when in any individual there is failure to do his part, another must be raised up to take his place. "His office let another take." But if the reason of a man's existence is the work he is called to do, and his worth is proportionate to his fulfilment of the task, then for him to fail means that even if some one else make good his failure, he himself will be a stone of less honour than he might have been in the building of the City of God.

An illustration may be found in the practice of praying for particular foreign missions or missionaries. A missionary society is a society within the Church in a position analogous to that of the family within the State. Of the missionary society some members are living and working abroad while others are at home. If it is in any sense a real society, the good of each member at home and abroad will be conditioned by the good of the whole society. Within the society certain ties between individuals create responsibilities of co-operation. If I have some personal knowledge of a missionary, or some interest in his work, then there is opened up to me an opportunity of helping in that work, and the opportunity brings with it the duty of doing my best in that direction. And as through the prayer and work of every member of the missionary society they themselves and the society as a whole reach their perfection, so in the perfection of each society is built up the whole Church of God.

It may be asked how we can know what will be good for a particular man and for the Kingdom of God, and how we can pray for him without that knowledge. The question has already been answered in part by the reference to our Lord's Prayer in Gethsemane, "Not what I will but what thou wilt." It may throw further light on the problem to reflect that there is a parallel question concerning the objects of desire. Indeed, the two may be treated side by side. Whatever it is right to desire, it is right to pray for, and, as has been pointed out above, the more we strive to co-operate with God in prayer, the more we shall learn what we may desire and for what we may pray. "The Spirit Himself helpeth our infirmity," and as the Spirit takes fuller and fuller possession of ourselves we shall find that it becomes impossible to pray for certain things, while there opens out to us a vision of the true blessings for which we must intercede. As we dwell in God and He in us we come to see with the eyes of God, and to see our friend with the eyes of God is to see him as he is in his true place as a member of the Kingdom. Our right method, then, is to bring to God in prayer all our desires, and as with the help of the Spirit we pray about them, we shall learn their true value and our prayers will become more intelligent and more fervent and full of faith.

If our prayer is to be intelligent we must not shut our eyes to any knowledge given us by God of His way of working in the world. In the passing of time there is a growth both in man's conception of the moral ideal and in our knowledge of God's working through nature. We must not ignore this growth in our prayers. We must not, for example, pray prayers which would involve approving of polygamy like the Patriarchs, or of slavery like St. Paul. Similarly, if a friend has appendicitis, our prayer for his recovery might be a prayer for a successful operation and not

for some strange and sudden return to health. It is because of this continuous growth in our moral and intellectual conceptions, which is as true of each man as of mankind as a whole, that we cannot at present claim perfect knowledge of what we ought to desire and pray for. But as the condition of all growth is the use and exercise of powers already possessed, it is by praying in accordance with the light within us that we find that light grow brighter and brighter.

There is, as it were, a hierarchy in the objects of desire and of prayer. We must put first things first. And it is in the prayer which is communion with God, and in the intercession which is co-operation with God, that we learn the true order of our desires. A simple illustration may suffice. We may pray for a friend to be kept out of danger, we may pray for him to be brave when danger comes, and we may pray that his bravery may be exhibited in the cause of righteousness. At a very low level we might pray for his safety at all costs, even if our prayer implied a prayer that the friend of some one else should suffer in place of ours. But such a prayer could hardly be called Christian at all. At a somewhat higher level we may pray for him to be brave in danger, without reflecting whether he is fighting for good or for evil. But if he is fighting in the cause of evil his cowardice at some moment of crisis may be the condition of the triumph of the forces of righteousness. If, then, in the good of the Kingdom of God lies the good of each member of it, the prayer for the bravery and safety of our friend must take a lower place in our minds than that for his devotion to the cause of the Kingdom.

And if after all our prayers he is killed—what then? Given a belief in immortality, the last paragraph will help to answer the question. If by our prayer our friend is more truly devoted to the cause of righteousness, if through this devotion he is more brave to meet

the danger that comes upon him, and able to find in suffering the joy of self-sacrifice, then surely we may believe that in the world to come we shall know that our prayer has not been in vain.

We pray as members of Christ. In one and all of us there dwells the one Spirit of God, uniting us to one another in Christ, in whom we share the life of God. As each one of us prays, in the power of that Spirit he co-operates with God, and in the spiritual growth of that one member as he prays, all the Church, the Body of Christ, grows, and each member is quickened. So we pray for those we love, that in them, too, the Body of Christ, which is the Kingdom of God, may come, knowing that in the growth of each all are helped, and that in the growth of all each participates. We share in the work of Him "who ever liveth to make intercession for us," until the day when our work in prayer shall be no longer seen through a glass darkly, but we shall know even as we are known.



VIII  
WORSHIP  
BY  
B. H. STREETER



# SYNOPSIS

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## VIII

### WORSHIP

#### PART I

#### THE NATURE OF WORSHIP

“WHAT is the chief end of man? To glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.”

Worship is commonly thought of as consisting entirely, or at any rate mainly, in moments of concentration in the inner chamber, in songs of praise in the great congregation, or in adoration of the uplifted Host. But if that were so, worship could only be a very small part of the lives of any save ministers and monks, and the best of the “good news” which Christ had to bring was meant only for a small corps of professionals and specialists; and the Gospel for the poor and simple consists only of the crumbs which fall from these rich men’s tables.

There is another reason why the popular associations of the word worship are far too narrow. To confine the notion of worship to specific devotional or ritual acts is to confine religion itself to these moments, for Worship, that is, the conscious orientation and dedication of the soul to the Divine, is the essential element in Religion. And it is only true Worship in so far as it pervades the whole life. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Prayer, praise, penitence, loving-kindness and heroic action are but

departmental aspects of Worship and have their meaning and inspiration from it. "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

The fundamental quality of the human soul is aspiration. Obsessed by false ideals, or shackled by evil habits, its aspirations may often be misguided; the soul nevertheless is always feebly pushing upwards like buried shoots towards the sunlight. All aspiration has in it an element of worship, and worship in its highest form is no more than aspiration consciously focussed on, and in the act of fruition of, the highest object of desire. Hence of all the departmental aspects of Worship in the larger sense defined above, Adoration is the most characteristic and the one which gives the key to the understanding of the rest, though of course if considered in abstraction from the rest it is a key without the door. Thus Penitence has in it an element of pain, duty an element of restraint, even prayer in its petitionary sense sounds a subdued note—at least all this is true in our present state of moral and religious development—Adoration is wholly spontaneous, wholly full of joy. "O God, my heart is ready, Lord, my heart is ready: I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have."

If Religion is as wide as life and wider—and we can assert no less—Worship also must be as wide and wider than life. If we must affirm *laborare est orare* we must affirm no less *laborare est adorare*—the daily work of a religious man is an unbroken act of adoration.<sup>1</sup> And this is no mere idealistic clap-trap. Such an ideal is to a great extent actually realised in many lives. It is realised by the artist wholly devoted to his Art, to whom the infinity of labour on petty detail is mere joy,

<sup>1</sup> It is said of Origen that his whole life was *μία προσευχή συνεχόμενη*. Cf. Westcott, *Religious Thought in the West*, p. 205.

so that it all conduces to the expression of his vision. It is realised by the student or scientist, to whom the tiresome dreariness of dry and meaningless details is illuminated by the passion of the search for Truth. It is realised by the mother feeling no tediousness in the infinitely exacting, infinitely trifling services joyfully rendered to her babe. The passion of the artist, of the seeker after truth, and of the mother is essentially worship. Let but the same spirit which now rules one department (albeit for them the central department) of their lives pervade their whole life; let them but clearly realise the full meaning and implication of it all, and their life will become a life of conscious worship of the Most High. The worship of God is not something different from the love of Humanity, the passion for the Beautiful, and the devotion to Truth; it is not something which exists alongside of these and in addition to them, it is what these actually are whenever and in so far as they are realised in their highest form, in their true co-ordination, and in their real meaning. Conscious worship of the Divine is not an extra, it is the summary and the explanation of every separate and departmental pursuit of the Ideal.

And yet to say without further explication that Worship is merely the sum total of the love of Goodness, Beauty and Truth, all realised in perfect harmony and proportion, is to leave out something essential. The love of Goodness means less than the love of God, unless we recollect that it must include not merely the love of the mother for the babe, but also that of the babe to the mother—reverence, gratitude, unqualified trust, as well as an ecstasy of self-devotion. The service of man is the most essential activity in the service of God, and the love of humanity is a necessary element in the love of God, but it is not the whole of it; and it only becomes the whole of it when directed towards that ideal Humanity which is for us the “image of the invisible God.”

Love can only be felt towards persons, and Worship implies a personal God. Yet it also implies a God who is more than personal, for personality, as we know it, is largely compact of idiosyncrasies and limitations. Personality is the highest thing of which we have experience, therefore it is the least inadequate category under which to think of God. But it is only a symbol. Yet it is a necessary symbol; for to say that God is impersonal is to liken Him, not to the highest, but to the lowest that we know, while to say that He is "supra-personal" may be technically correct, but to the imagination it is meaningless. In so far as God is transcendent, universal, unlimited, the impersonal static concepts of Beauty and Truth are the most expressive symbols or categories by which we can conceive and apprehend Him. But, though we often speak of "the Good," or of Righteousness, as if it were a self-existent abstract entity, Goodness can only exist as the quality of a living Will, and is therefore best conceived of under a dynamic and personal category. In so far, then, as God is good and must therefore be thought of as active, loving, responsive, alive, He can only show Himself to us as Goodness operative in Human Personality at its best and greatest—supremely so in the ideal Man who once trod the earth in Palestine.

The Highest Worship must go out to God, on the one hand felt to be transcendent, universal, unlimited, and on the other hand realised as Personal and Father. Hence the Catholic Church does not worship the Historic Jesus, as some moderns would have us do, but the Eternal and Omnipresent Word, Utterance, Self-expression of God, which was in Jesus Christ focally and supremely manifested in the flesh. And the Church does not worship that Word, which was able to find its expression in an ideal Human Personality, as the totality of the Divine, but only as one integral, eternal and essential element in an ineffable Reality, which can only be thought of in a symbol which by

its transparent paradox proclaims to the simplest intelligence the transcendent and incomprehensible nature of that for which it stands—Three in One and One in Three.<sup>1</sup> The ultimate nature of the Godhead must ever be a mystery beyond our understanding, but, granted that what we see in Christ is essentially Divine, it is a mystery with a luminous centre.

There is an old-standing wrangle between the advocates of "Art for art's sake" and the champions of the pre-eminence of "Ethics." Both sides fail to see that the conception of Worship is that which co-ordinates and illustrates the three parallel aspirations of the human mind, the passion for Good, for Beauty and for Truth. "The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork"; and "God saw that it was *good*." That which is aesthetically sublime is also morally good, and still more obviously is it the case that that which is morally great is also aesthetically sublime. The thrill with which we contemplate a deed that won the Victoria Cross is closely akin to that which we feel as we gaze on a view of lofty mountains, a piece of noble architecture, or on a great picture. For this emotion, at bottom, is neither aesthetic appreciation nor moral approbation, it is religious adoration.

Moreover, the appeal to the aesthetic or moral sense is, at any rate in its supreme form, necessarily associated with an implicit appeal to the passion for Truth. A distinction is made by some thinkers between the judgments of value, which are characteristic of ethics or aesthetic, and the judgment of fact, which is characteristic of the search for truth; but this distinction, if valid at all, is only valid up to a point. If I say "This *is* beautiful," or "This *is* right," I do not merely

<sup>1</sup> The fact that the actual Trinitarian formula was arrived at by the Church as the result of historical controversies fought out against a background of metaphysical thought now largely obsolete, in no way detracts from its value as a devotional symbol, so long as it is regarded as such, and not as being also a piece of finally valid metaphysic. Cf. Essay I, p. 38.

mean that it produces a certain subjective impression on me, or that I personally value it in that way. What I mean is that this value is something which inheres in the thing or act in itself, and that this impression is one which is necessarily produced by the thing itself upon a normal mind. And if it be replied that only men of a certain training and certain type of mind do as a matter of fact see it in this way, I reply that this is equally true of the conclusion of a complicated mathematical argument, which is only convincing to a man with a particular training and an adequate intellectual power. The emotion of aesthetic or moral admiration would lose all its essential quality if once we regarded it as a mere subjective valuation. It is just because and in so far as we instinctively assume that a fundamental reality behind is the ground and justification of the value we attach to it that we experience the emotion we do. A sonnet no doubt gives us the poet's subjective view of a phase of life, and a painting the subjective emotion suggested to the painter by a particular landscape; but their power to move us depends solely on the power of each to impress us that his view is the true view, his impression is a true one, is one which is justified by fact. Similarly an act of sacrifice only appeals to us as admirable if it has some relation to reasonable ends. To risk one's life to save a wasp from drowning would be absurd. There is a real distinction between the Heroic and the Quixotic, though different people will draw the line in different places. And the distinction depends largely on considerations apprehended by the intellect, that is, by the instrument with which we appraise truth.

At the foot of the hills the rivers of Goodness, Beauty and Truth may flow apart, but all have their source in the one field of the eternal snows; and the more completely the love of these becomes conscious of its own nature, the more conscious it becomes of its own essentially religious character and of the real

nature of its own object, until at last it becomes completely articulate in that highest verbal expression of conscious human worship: "We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty."

But it is of the first importance that the love of these things should so become conscious of its own character. For without such consciousness it is liable to become itself distorted, and to acquire one-sided and even false conceptions of the things which it loves. It is a matter of everyday experience that the devotees of the concrete embodiments of Goodness, Beauty and Truth, in the shape of the theory or practice of conduct, of art and literature, or of Philosophy and Science frequently fail in their own special department through pursuing it in too great isolation. The intellectual fallacies of the struggle-for-existence philosophy of Nietzsche would have been avoided had he had a clearer grasp of moral values. For the same reason the extraordinary abilities of an Aubrey Beardsley produced results which aesthetically fell below the first rank. And the crimes of well-intentioned ignorance in every department of life are sufficiently numerous to make unnecessary any particular illustration of the pernicious result of the divorce between the interest in Goodness and the interest in Truth. The activities of the mind and heart, like those of the social organism, are all interconnected, and no specialised activity can produce its best results if it is out of its right relation to the whole. Harmony is the first and last requisite for the ideal exercise of all human activity. Harmony is essentially co-ordination of the parts with the whole, and complete harmony cannot be attained without a conscious recognition of its conditions. Thus devotion to Goodness, devotion to Beauty, devotion to Truth in the last resort can only coexist, can only each attain its true character, if the object of the individual's own special interest is seen to be an expression of and a



part of the Eternal Harmony which is above all, which is in all, and which *is* all. When this is consciously realised, and all the faculties are consciously and spontaneously orientated in that direction, Worship in its highest form begins.

There is, however, another consideration which must not be overlooked. In the case of aesthetic it would be generally conceded that, although the greatest art is great precisely through the universality of its appeal, yet in the act of perceptive appreciation there is always something which is essentially individual and incommunicable. In questions of ethics, the social necessity which has compelled the laying down of general rules of conduct, disguises from many the fact that the same is true of any act of moral choice. So also in all departments of knowledge which make any demand on the imagination, History for instance, there is in the last resort an individual and incommunicable element in the perception of truth; and, though it is precisely the elimination of this element which is the conscious aim of Science as commonly understood, I am not sure that it is more than approximately attainable even in Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics.

In Religion, the moment it ceases to be a mere formalism or a mere obedience, that is to say the moment it takes on its specific characteristics, this individual and incommunicable element becomes at once conspicuous. Indeed many of those of a mystic temperament have been inclined to affirm that only in so far as it is this is it religion at all. *Solus cum solo* to these is the sum of all.

But the individuality of any expression or apprehension, whether aesthetic, moral, intellectual or religious, is like the individuality of a particular leaf on a tree. No leaf is exactly like any other, but each is what it is because of the tree of which it is a leaf. The aesthetic, moral or intellectual apprehension of the individual is something which in each man has been shaped by

the influence, the teaching, the presupposed standards of a society, which have impressed themselves on him by personal contact, through books, art, architecture, social or religious institutions and the like. This is not to say that the aesthetic, moral or intellectual apprehension of an individual is merely that of the community he lives in. It is quite often violently opposed to that of the majority of that community, but it is none the less in that case traceable to influences coming either from a minority within that community or from some other community. This outside influence may come from a different social class or from a foreign country, or it may come from the revived memory of a long forgotten age—as was the case with the Reformation, the Oxford Movement, or the Pre-Raphaelitic revival. The most original of individuals no less than the most conventional would not be what he is apart from the fact that he inherits and expresses a spiritual tradition. And what holds good of art, morals and knowledge must clearly hold good of religion also.

Seeing, then, that men are born babies and have to grow up slowly—a fact sometimes overlooked by theorists—seeing also that even those who have seemingly made the greatest progress confess that they count not themselves to have attained, it is obvious that the capacity for the highest worship will never be developed by the isolated individual. It will only be possible for the individual if he is either born into a family or educated at a school, or brought up in a Church, or in some more accidental way brought into contact with persons, ideas, books or buildings, which will stimulate and direct in him the nascent religious instinct and perceptions.

Nor is this dependence of the individual upon others confined to the period of youth or instruction. “It is not good that the man should be alone” applies equally to the most mature. The artist or the scholar who

cuts himself off from the stimulus of personal contact with fellow-workers in the same field usually sooner or later manifests lack of vigour or degenerates into a crank or an eccentric. But no artist has ever cut himself off entirely from contact with other artists; even if he avoids his contemporaries he has still the inspiration of the contemplation, or at least of the recollection, of the works of his great precursors; and no scholar or thinker, however solitary, ever contemplated cutting himself off from books<sup>1</sup>—but books are the digest of personalities, and reading is a no less real communion with other persons than face to face converse, though commonly books and speech show a different aspect of the personality communed with. Still more clear is it that Goodness cannot be realised at all except in the interaction of persons. The “Will to Good” can only be exercised in reference to persons, though these need not necessarily be visibly present to him who wills or loves.

In no department of human life is clear perception or complete realisation possible except through expression, and expression withers without the stimulus of the necessity to express to another person or persons. The taste which enables one to admire a landscape or a work of art has been born in one through interchange of impressions with others in the past; as a result of that past I can now admire in solitude, but I cannot indefinitely admire alone. Unless in some way I can express in word, in gesture, in writing my own appreciation, it slowly dies. But unless I have a friend to whom I may speak, or a public for whom I write, there is no stimulus to expression.<sup>2</sup> It is, moreover, a fact of experience that the capacity to appreciate is itself greatly heightened by the presence

<sup>1</sup> Certain Indian thinkers have done so, but not before they have learnt by heart a large selection of great literature. Such learning by heart is really not a getting rid of books but a substitution of an alternative way of using them.

<sup>2</sup> This holds good even of private diaries. Pepys had in view at least himself another and later self, who would value and understand his confidences.

of others with similar tastes ; thus one's aesthetic appreciation of a concert or a play is very considerably affected by the attitude of the rest of the audience.

So it is in Religion. Even the most solitary of mystics lives a social life by the fact that he prays for others. And he communes at least with the great souls of religious men of the past in virtue of the passages of the Bible or the Liturgy which he reads or knows by heart and from time to time remembers. The ideal of the religious life as one of uninterrupted communion with God *solus cum solo*, without any communion with human souls as its accompaniment, has never been realised even by monks and hermits, and the attempt to realise it often defeats itself. *Solus cum solo* is well for certain moments, but just as the life of a man is necessarily social, so also that part of his life which is most clearly and consciously recognised as concentrated on religion must be at any rate in part social. Those who too frequently strive to be alone with God are in danger of ending by being alone with themselves.

There is another and a deeper reason why fellowship is a necessary element in the highest religious experience. The Buddhist monk may make solitary absorption in the Absolute his ideal, but, for the Christian, God is Love, and can only be rightly worshipped by men in proportion as they are themselves instinct with the spirit of love. "But if a man loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" And this is not a matter of "mere morality"—if I may use a common phrase without assenting to all its implications—it follows from the very nature of worship as such.

All conscious prayer and worship is an attempt to bring about an intercourse between God and man, that is to say its object is to establish a harmony between the soul and the Power which controls the universe, that Power in whom and through whom and by whom are all things. Were this harmony of the soul with

the Source of all life realised by all living things, all the misery of the world would disappear ; for this misery is the result of impatience, discontent, envy, hatred, malice, and all forms of uncharitableness and self-assertion, that is, it is the result of *discord* of one kind or another. If an orchestra is to get together, each player must take his time from the conductor. If that is done, each will necessarily be in time with all the others. So long as any are out of time, it is hard for the rest to keep right ; but, once all have got together, each feels himself "with" the rest and it is almost impossible to get wrong. Moreover, individual capacity is enhanced, so that some who, as soloists, would be but second-rate performers, may play a worthy part in a first-class orchestra. Just so with prayer. It is not an accident, nor a kind of complimentary recognition of a proper precedence in petitions, but an inner logic that accounts for the fact that the Lord's Prayer begins "Hallowed be Thy Name" ; for the effective recognition of God and the realisation of harmony with Him is a necessary condition of the coming of His Kingdom and of His Will being done on earth. The harmony of the whole depends on the harmony of all, jointly and severally, with God. But though some incipient harmony of each with God is the primary condition of harmony with one another, harmony with one another is an equally necessary condition of the maintenance and of the further perfecting of harmony with God ; the two act and react on one another.

Hence the Christian insistence on the vital relation of conduct to religion rests on a devotional as well as on a moral necessity. Injustice, cruelty and pride, and the spirit which causes them, make impossible true harmony between men ; justice and kindness tend to produce it ; real affection ensures its presence. Accordingly, the sense of fellowship is the greatest of all aids to worship. Hence in the Communion Service of the Church of

England, the invitation to approach to the Lord's Table summons only those who are "in love and charity with their neighbours." On paper the Church of England does most things well; but it must be admitted that in practice the conscious realisation of fellowship in worship is usually conspicuous by its absence. Yet universal experience shows that where there is complete and conscious harmony between a group of worshippers, the sense of rest and elevation is indefinitely enhanced. In such a company the soul is attuned to communion with the Divine. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst," is not merely a comfortably sounding text, it is the expression of a fact of experience.

The spiritual, like the physical, organism can only act in response to stimulus, and when two or three, and still more when a multitude, are gathered together, with minds, feelings, aspirations concentrated on a single object, each one of the multitude experiences a heightened power of perception, a deepened passion. Psychologists have noted this power of mutual stimulus as the explanation of the fact that bodies of men acting together under a single impulse are capable, whether for good or evil, of a sensitiveness to impression, of a depth of emotion, or of a strength of purpose far beyond the individual capacity of their constituent members. A public meeting may be moved to enthusiasm, the members of a mob will commit outrages, the men of a regiment will manifest heroism, far beyond their normal capacity as individuals. Is it strange, then, that, as has been already remarked, experience should show that a group of men or women are capable of realising and appropriating the inspiration of the Divine Presence, or of submitting themselves to the guidance of the Divine will, to an extent far exceeding anything which would have been possible to them alone? The Divine Presence is always there; the gathering together of the faithful is not a magic spell which attracts to a

particular spot what was previously absent, but it may and does enable them individually to realise and to appropriate that which was always there, and enables them to see clearly what before was hidden by a veil.

Psychologists have pointed out that this stimulation of individual sensitiveness to impressions is affected not merely by the visible presence of a "Crowd" but also by the existence of a "Public" or a "Movement," *i.e.* of a still larger number that we have read of or are told about but whose actual presence does not stimulate our senses, so that, for instance, whole classes or even whole nations may be moved by a wave of feeling. This is certainly eminently true of Religion. Who has not felt that certain buildings, certain places, through the fact of their long consecration to sacred thoughts and sacred gatherings, have in them a power which looses the bonds of sense and impels the individual to worship? But the most conspicuous instance of this is surely the Eucharist. It is not the opening of the mouth to receive the elements but the opening of the heart to welcome the Divine Presence that constitutes the significance of the act. And this opening of the heart is enormously facilitated by the knowledge of the fact that the partaking of consecrated Bread and Wine is not merely the approach to God and the pledge of common discipleship of the half-dozen, or it may be the hundred, persons gathered at that one hour in that one building. It is an act of fellowship in worship with "the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world," and with the Church of all the ages, from that night when the Master took bread and brake it till the end of time.

To sum up—Worship is the dedication of the whole life, and a dedication of it to the Highest. But it is a dedication which, to be complete, must be fully conscious both of itself and of its object. Moreover it has both an absolutely individual and also a neces-

sarily social aspect. Thus daily work, private prayer and meditation, and corporate devotion are equally indispensable elements in the expression of worship in its true sense: but no one of these can properly be pursued as an isolated activity, they must be correlated with and must interpenetrate one another.

The practical question remains how best to secure this result. In so far as this question means how to live the ideal life, it is one which could not be answered in a whole volume, much less in a single essay, and the answer which satisfies one man can never more than partially satisfy another. All that it is proposed to attempt in this paper is to suggest for discussion one or two quite general principles. It is clear, then, to begin with, that before men can worship they must acquire two things—the knowledge of what is the Highest, and the capacity of surrender to it when known. Aspiration and the “divine discontent,” which is its correlative, are no doubt the most fundamental instincts of humanity. But all the fundamental problems of life arise from the fact that aspirations are, on the one hand, too sluggish, and, on the other, are directed towards false and unsatisfying ideals. Men have too little passion for the ideal, and what they have is largely misdirected. The cry of the prophet has ever been twofold: “Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters”; and “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?” Humanity is in need of two things, more life, and more light—strength and illumination.

Now, from one point of view, all illumination and all strength being from God, we cannot foresee or control the moment or the mode in which they will become effectual for the individual. Yet we are bidden to ask that we may receive and to “strive to enter in,” and it is a matter of ordinary experience that certain conditions, internal and external, are more favourable than others for disposing the soul for the



reception of that which is given. In this respect religion does not differ at all from knowledge or art. The thinker does not know how and when there will come into his mind the solution of some difficult problem. The artist does not know precisely how and when he will see the vision of beauty and the scheme of line or colour that will reproduce it, but they know that inherited instruction, previous study, and experience and concentration on an object are preliminary conditions. It is therefore incumbent on the individual and on the religious community to make a careful study of the conditions which are normally favourable to making men receptive to the Divine inspiration when it comes : and, having found out what these are, so far as possible to create them. Among these conditions two are of pre-eminent importance. First, the individual should reserve some portion or portions of every day, however short, for prayer, meditation and reading of the Bible. Secondly, the religious community must realise its religious fellowship and express its corporate ideals in special acts of corporate worship at special times and in special places.

It is with this question of corporate worship alone that I propose to deal in this essay. But before doing so I would add one caution. However vitally necessary acts of corporate worship are, real harm is done unless they are perfectly related to the rest of life. In the turmoil of the everyday round of work and pleasure both strength and illumination come to all whose eyes are open to see the meaning of their experiences and profit by the discipline. Life in the world is far richer in potentialities than is life in the cloister. But in life in the world the rule holds with even greater rigour, "To him that hath shall be given, from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Everything depends on having and holding fast the clue, in keeping always in view, amid the buffeting of low ideals around, the beacon-light of

a great purpose and a great vision. But the meaning of the purpose and the vision are only really grasped when they have been tested in the battle of life.

I do not say that it is necessarily wrong for certain persons—clergy, members of religious orders and the like—to make the performance of what are technically known as definite acts of devotion, the main business of their life. If the Christianisation of life demands that every Christian should set apart certain minutes daily, certain hours weekly for such observance, it may well demand that certain individuals should, for the guidance of others and the strengthening of the community as a whole, become, as it were, specialists in such things. It is only necessary to protest against the idea that a specialist in the technical observance of religion is a better or a more religious man than his lay brother. The protest is the more necessary as books on religion are mostly written by such specialists. Such books are valuable in proportion as they reflect the personal experiences of their writers, but the experiences of the specialist necessarily presuppose a way of life which for other men would be an artificial one. Hence the feeling of unreality, the hot-house atmosphere, associated in the minds of so many laymen with the very name of religious literature and religion. The prayer of Sir Jacob Astley before the battle of Edgehill: "Lord, Thou knowest how busy I must be this day. If I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me," is worth more than half the books of devotion.

Hence, on the one hand, the Christian will insist on the need for special times and places for concentrated aspiration, thought and prayer in a specifically and avowedly religious atmosphere. If Christ Himself needed to retire from time to time to the mountain-top to pray, lesser men need not be ashamed to acknowledge that necessity. But, on the other hand, he will never forget that the hour of private prayer or public worship, although it is an end in itself and is a

supremely valuable end, yet loses its own essential character and may even become a positive evil unless it is so related to the whole activities and aspirations of the soul as to facilitate the right orientation towards the Divine of the ordinary daily life. Neither does Sunday exist for the sake of the week, nor the week for the sake of Sunday, but both together to subserve the complete and harmonious concentration of body, soul and spirit on the conscious dedication of the self to the Highest.

## PART II

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

CORPORATE worship, we have seen, is not only a necessary means to, but is an integral part of, that complete and conscious dedication of the self to the Highest which is the essence of worship in the larger sense. But it is impossible to ignore the fact that at the present day there is a widespread and growing discontent with, or at any rate lack of enthusiasm for, accepted and traditional forms of Public Worship. The decline in church-going may be a little more marked in some denominations than in others, but it is a universal phenomenon in all churches and in all countries. This is usually explained as being due to two causes : (*a*) a change in public feeling and fashion, *plus* the multiplication of Sunday amusements ; (*b*) the spread of education, followed as this has been by the problem novel and the Rationalist Press which have, in a crude way, brought home to the man in the street the intellectual doubts and difficulties which a generation ago were felt only in a comparatively small and highly cultivated circle. Doubtless these are the main two causes at work, but in order to understand their real significance we must go a little deeper and ask why it is that they operate in the way they do. It is not sufficient to point to a change of fashion ; we must enquire the reason of the change. Again, if Christianity is really true, every increase in knowledge

should make this more, not less evident. Thus to attribute the falling off in church-going to the spread of education comes very near saying that Christianity, like some complexions, doesn't look its best by daylight—a perilous admission in times like these.

(a) It used, no doubt, to be taken for granted that a man or a woman who is endeavouring to live a moral life would, as a matter of course, go to some place of worship at least once on a Sunday, and some of the old-fashioned church-going was accordingly of a more or less hypocritical character. People who cared only for appearances went to church because they wanted to be thought respectable. That is no longer the case—but why? For the simple reason that so many of those who are really trying to live well, and who do not care for appearances, have ceased to go. In morals and religion those who care for reality are the first to abandon any practice or observance from which they do not derive spiritual nutriment: twenty years later those who wish to be thought to care follow their lead. The falling off of the church-going for respectability's sake is in itself a gain rather than a loss. But its significance is immense. Those whose conduct is determined solely by what the world values are like floating straws, though they move nothing themselves they are an infallible indication of the direction of the real stream. The counter-attraction of Sunday excursions, “cinemas” or golf no doubt partly accounts for the change of fashion, but too much must not be put down to this. The absence of the frivolous from Church might be set down to this cause, but it is not only the frivolous who stay away. Average humanity is not slow to curtail even its amusements for the sake of anything which seems to it really worth while.

(b) It is probably difficult to overestimate the extent to which intellectual doubts and difficulties prevail among the younger generation. But in the majority of cases these difficulties are of a vague and general kind;

they are more often absorbed from the atmosphere of contemporary literature and common talk than the result of clear individual thought on definite issues. A man or woman who has frankly and clearly thought out his or her difficulties is usually one who is on the road to finding a solution, and who will do so, if fortunate enough to get a little sympathy from one who has trod the same path before, or a little judicious advice as to philosophical or theological reading—though possibly the solution may not always be one which would entirely commend itself to his “grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice.” The more part do not find a solution to their difficulties because they do not seriously seek one ; and they do not seriously seek, because they are only half interested ; and they are only half interested, because they have come to regard public worship, which is the most conspicuous external symbol of religion, as a tedious and unnecessary discipline rather than as a natural expression and satisfaction of religious needs. There is something to be said for the view that it is good for young people occasionally to submit to being bored ; there is nothing to be said for the widespread practice of using church services for this purpose. To do so is to kill that instinct of spontaneity which is the very essence of worship.

The practical test of the decline in church-going has brought home to the leading men of all denominations the need of some modifications in the traditional forms and methods of public worship. But though the need of change and experiment is very generally recognised, there is a danger that much time and effort may be wasted and many fruitless experiments be made through the failure to ask the preliminary question whether there may not be certain general principles, deducible from the nature and purpose of corporate worship as such, the clear apprehension of which is vital to any proposals for reform. In fact there seems to be a real demand for what in academic language might be called both

a Philosophy and a Psychology of public worship. From Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* and other well-known works may be culled many sage reflections on the principles and methods of congregational worship. But though the material to be derived from these writers is most valuable, it is presented too exclusively as a defence or rationale of existing liturgies to meet the demand I have indicated. What is wanted is a way of approaching the subject which, without neglecting the thought and experience of the past, will take a less departmental, a less apologetic, a more comprehensive and a more scientific view of the whole problem.

An undertaking so ambitious would be far beyond the limits of a single essay, as well as outside the capacity of the present writer ; all that can be attempted here is to outline certain broad general principles, to draw from them a few deductions, and to make certain practical suggestions, which seem to be in accord with these principles and have at any rate the advantage of having stood the test of a certain amount of experience.

### SOME FIRST PRINCIPLES

“Behold I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him.” The omnipresence of a Divine Power spontaneously offering itself to men to be by them freely appropriated, if they will, is the presupposition of all specifically Christian worship. It is this belief in the beneficent initiative of the Divine which distinguishes Christian prayer from magic, that is from all pseudo-religious operations designed to bring into the service of man a supernatural power assumed to be reluctant. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ?” Not a little, then, of the traditional language of devotion, by the intensity of its emphasis on the

element of deprecation, beseeching and entreaty, cannot but suggest to the plain man that God is at times reluctant to bless or to forgive, and must therefore be regarded as a survival in Christianity of a pre-Christian view of God's character. Such language is sometimes defended on the ground that the sinfulness of sin must at all costs be kept before men's minds. But to imply that God can be capricious or vindictive is to do this at too great a cost. It is better to forget that man is sinful than to attribute sinfulness to God. We are not worthy to gather up the crumbs under His table, and it is vital that we recognise the fact ; but it is no less vital that we approach Him in the spirit of confidence and trust, and not with the deprecating hesitancy of an Agag doubting rather than hoping that "the bitterness of death is past."

Again, from this fundamental presupposition that God welcomes and Himself initiates the approach of man to Him there follows another important consequence in regard to the function in Christianity of the teacher, the preacher or the priest. It is not their business to say, "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" but merely to open the ears of men to the Divine voice which says, "Come ye to the waters," and to direct the eyes of the thirsty towards the rushing stream, leaving it to them spontaneously to drink. Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but it is God who gives the increase ; and the increase is a free spontaneous growth of the individual soul into receptivity and responsiveness towards the Divine. Personality and individuality are to be guided and stimulated, not crushed or dominated, whether it be by the boisterous intrusion of the forceful personality of an evangelistic tub-thumper or by the rigid discipline of a too cut-and-dried system of doctrine or a rigid scheme of devotion. Preacher and priest should take as their model the kindergarten teacher, not the Prussian drill-sergeant.

Thus the beginning and the end of the organisation



of public worship should be directed towards establishing such subjective conditions in the minds and hearts of those gathered together as are likely to make them most receptive and responsive to the operation of the Divine influence. The communion of the soul with the Divine necessarily has a reciprocal character ; there must be moments of pure receptivity, moments of conscious self-expression. He who would pray must at one time speak, at another listen. He who would praise must at one time cry aloud, at another contemplate in peaceful adoration. Passivity must alternate with activity, but the passivity must be that of restful reception, not that of inattention. When attention ceases, worship ceases with it.

All this applies equally to public and private worship, but the essential consideration in the organisation of public worship is the fact that the mental state of every individual in a large gathering is affected by the mental state of the gathering as a whole. When a multitude is swayed by a wave of contrition, supplication or thankfulness, every individual in it has his own perception, feeling and capacity indefinitely enhanced. But, on the other hand, when the majority are listless or inattentive, it is doubly difficult for the minority to make their own prayers or praises a reality. No student of the psychology of attention is surprised to find that experience teaches that a congregation which is "bored" simply *cannot* worship. The "short bright service"—a characteristic development of recent years—is the result of a vague recognition of this fact. But in too many cases it has only succeeded in being short and bright, not in being also a serious religious service. The old-fashioned service may have caused spiritual indigestion, but some modern substitutes appear to offer us only a *hors d'œuvre* when we look for a square meal. Failures and imperfect successes, however, are inevitable in the earlier stages of every movement, and it is undoubtedly true that many individuals, by trying

experiments and working by rule of thumb methods, have evolved various types of occasional services which in their hands have proved to be extraordinarily successful. If the results of such practical experiment could be brought into conscious and explicit relation to the study both of the psychology of attention and of the philosophy of the nature of worship, we might hope to establish certain general principles which would guide the Church as a whole towards very necessary reforms.

In considering the organisation of the conditions, especially the psychological conditions, of public worship, it is important to guard against the mistake of considering them merely, or even mainly, in so far as they affect the emotional attitude of the worshipper. The combined activity and receptivity in the relation of the soul to the Divine is not merely an affair of the feelings, it is equally, or rather—as I personally should be inclined to say—it is mainly, a matter of the mind and of the will. A meeting so arranged as to tend merely to make people *feel* religious is worse than useless unless it is either supplemented by other agencies, or itself contains elements, which educate the mind to a clearer apprehension of the Divine nature and the Divine commandments, and also elements which strengthen the determination of the will to follow them when known. Hence instruction and exhortation, whether in the form of preaching, catechising or reading aloud of Scripture, though, strictly speaking, these cannot be called worship in the narrower sense, are recognised as an important element in the regular “assembling of ourselves together” of every Christian community. But neither this nor indeed any other element in the order of service adopted by any church can or ought to be considered in isolation. Public worship should be so arranged as to supplement, develop and inspire all other activities of the religious community—its system of religious instruction in schools for the young, and of lectures, classes, etc., for

adults ; its practical, social or religious activities, and the scheme of private devotion or discipline of life which it encourages or prescribes for its members.

The religious attitude of mind combines in a peculiar way the elements of activity and repose. Now you cannot make a man, much less a congregation, religious—that is the business of the Holy Ghost. But you can so order the service that it will be likely to induce in the mind of the average member of the congregation an attitude of attention without undue excitement, and of restfulness without inertia.

The one thing that must kill attention is monotony. Variety is absolutely essential. The topics which the mind is asked to contemplate, the emotions which the individual is invited to share, or the resolutions which he is encouraged to frame should be varied. Confession, supplication, thanksgiving must none of them be continued too long—not for the lack of sins to confess, of persons to pray for, or of blessings to thank God for, but because the intensity of concentration which any of these activities demands is psychologically impossible for long at a time. He that attempts to pray too long ceases to pray at all. What is wanted, as St. Augustine pointed out, is not length but intensity ; *non multa locutio sed multa precatio*.<sup>1</sup> The variety, also, should extend to the posture of the body—kneeling, sitting, standing should alternate at proper intervals. A certain amount of ritual is in this respect of value : it gives variety to the service by varying the appeal through the ear by that through the eye.

It is mainly to the needs of the average man, not to those of the exceptional or the exceptionally trained person, that an order of public worship should be adapted ; and for the average man attention is

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.*, v. 34 : “Again, for as much as effectual prayer is joined with a vehement intention of the inferior powers of the soul, which cannot therein long continue without pain, it hath been therefore thought good so by turns to interpose still somewhat for the higher part of the mind, the understanding, to work upon, that both being kept in continual exercise with variety, neither might feel any great uneasiness, and yet each be a spur to other.”

impossible without variety. On the other hand, the familiarity of old associations is the mother of repose. Hence too great straining after variety is quite as pernicious as too great monotony. To leave the form of words used at the consecration of the elements in the Communion Service to the discretion of the individual minister, is psychologically as great an error as to damp down the attention of the dearly beloved brethren by an analysis of the purposes of their having assembled themselves together, repeated in the same words twice daily throughout the year. On the other hand, the maximum of religious appeal is often made where familiarity and freshness can be combined in the same utterance. One may instance the best-known Christmas and Easter hymns, which are familiar because sung every year, but ever new because sung only once a year; or again the Service for the Burial of the Dead which, to an Anglican, has all the appeal of familiarity and sacred association but is not, like so much of the Prayer Book, staled by too frequent repetition.

### SILENCE

The communion of the soul with the Divine is a reciprocal activity. To put it anthropomorphically, in prayer it is not enough to speak, we must also listen. But the uninterrupted course of prayers, reading, singing, preaching which prevails in most current types of service leaves no room for the silent waiting on God which is an essential element in worship, and in corporate quite as much as in individual worship. The House of God is not being put to its proper use when those who desire simply to "rest in the Lord" do so in the face of difficulties. Moreover, whether a church be accustomed to a fixed Liturgy or to extemporary prayer led by the minister, it is impossible that the special needs of every individual can be met in the written or spoken prayer. In the conventional Sunday morning service

of most denominations, the individual desirous of praying for certain special needs, whether of himself or of others, can only do so by distracting his attention for a time from the more general needs which the congregation as a whole is thinking of—thereby both detracting from the spiritual unity of the prayers of the congregation, and losing the spiritual support of fellowship in his own prayers. Hence intervals of silence in which individuals can think specially of their own or their friends' needs, or in which the whole body is invited simply to wait upon God, are a vital necessity.

The explicit recognition of the value of silence is the great contribution to religion of the Society of Friends, and in an age of rush and tumble many feel strongly drawn to the infinite quietness and simplicity of the Quaker Meeting. But the silent waiting on God, punctuated by verbal prayer, praise or exhortation, which characterises the Quaker Meeting, is only adapted for comparatively small gatherings of men and women, the majority at least of whom have already attained a high level of spiritual life. A Church which aspires to retain its hold on all sorts and conditions of men cannot presuppose in an average congregation the degree of enlightened democracy and spontaneity in religious grasp and expression which are necessary to prevent such a meeting becoming meaningless, boring and unfruitful. Nevertheless it is widely felt that the silent waiting on God is an element for which far too little room is given in the public worship of other denominations. It need hardly, however, be added that it would be disastrous suddenly to spring long intervals of silence upon a congregation not familiar with its use. Preliminary instruction and the habituation to the practice of smaller groups must precede any attempt to introduce it in large gatherings.

The Roman Church, though less explicitly than the Quakers, has in practice recognised the value of silence. At Low Mass there are considerable intervals of silence,

the prayers are read in a low voice and the faithful are not expected to follow the actual service carefully, except at certain supreme moments. Indeed they are encouraged to make use of manuals of private devotion, the prayers in which bear no resemblance to the Latin prayers being offered at the time by the priest. Many Anglicans treat the Communion Service much in the same way. Roman Catholics often express a personal liking for the quiet of Low Mass in preference to the elaborate magnificence of High Mass; and it is, I believe, the opportunity given for silent meditation and personal intercession in an atmosphere of corporate prayer which is one of the main reasons for the modern revival of sacramental worship. Though it is surely better explicitly to allow intervals of silence, *e.g.*, after the Consecration Prayer, for private devotion, than to encourage the substitution of these for the actual prayers prescribed in the Liturgy.

#### SYMBOLISM

The elder Cato is reported to have remarked that the nature of women is such that while you cannot live happily with them, you cannot live at all without them. The same might be said of religious symbols. Round them gather most of the controversies that have embittered, most of the superstitions which have degraded, Christianity. Religion deals with the infinite and the inexpressible, yet in so much as neither the mind nor the heart nor the will of man can respond to that which is wholly unexpressed, some expression of the ineffable and some conception of the inconceivable must be attempted. Religious symbols may be either words, emblems or ritual acts. "Our Father which art in Heaven" is a good example of a verbal symbol. Another is the doctrine of the Trinity. The formula One God in three Persons, containing as it does the affirmation of an arithmetical contradiction obvious to a

child of four years old, is a permanent reminder that Personality as we know it is but an inadequate symbol of the nature of an infinite, self-contained and all-embracing Spirit. The Cross may stand as an instance of the emblem symbol. The Sacrament of Holy Communion may be taken as an example of symbol through ritual act.

The hallowed phrase, the shapen metal, and the ritual act are each attempts to express the inexpressible. Their power to express it depends partly on the intrinsic suitability of the words or the acts, but still more on historical origins and long associations. The expressiveness of a symbol is not absolute, it is relative to the history and religious experience of the particular community. The Cross means nothing to a Buddhist, nor the Bo-tree to a Christian. Similarly, a symbol in origin the same may come to mean different things to different societies. Thus to the Nonconformist the Eucharist is primarily an expression of fellowship in and through Christ; to the Roman Catholic it is primarily a stimulus to adoration; but why and how this can be the case with either of them is usually quite unintelligible to the other. It is this fact of the relativity of all symbols to the history and experience of the particular community that uses them which makes it impossible to lay down any principles with regard to the use of symbols in religion which have more than a limited applicability.

The Roman Mass strikes many minds as over-elaborate and fussy, but whatever view may be held of the sacramental doctrine implied in the rite, no one can fail to recognise the religious value of the dramatic simplicity of the service of Benediction. Granted a belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation, it is hard to conceive a more effective way of attuning the soul to adoration than this service, with the Litany before the sacred Symbol high above the altar, culminating in the supreme moment when the priest through the

rising cloud of incense turns from side to side blessing the kneeling multitude with the uplifted Host. But the Church of Rome has bought the mystical, aesthetic appeal of a rite like this at the price of the suppression of individual freedom and initiative and the cramping of intellectual development, combined with the tolerance and often active encouragement of gross superstition. The price is too high, and the thing purchased is not the best, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God with all thy *mind*, as well as with heart and soul and strength. A worship which is not the spontaneous expression of the highest intellectual, as well as of the highest ethical and aesthetic, activity of the race is unworthy of its object.

The triumph of the Roman system, were such a thing thinkable, would be an incalculable disaster to religion, but only a little less disastrous would be the complete disappearance of that whole conception of worship for which the Roman Church has stood. At the time of the Reformation there is little doubt that the use of images and pictures, and in particular the sacramental symbolism of the Church, had, so far at least as the mass of the people were concerned, degenerated into idolatry; and our fathers were probably quite right in supposing that this could only be cured by making a clean sweep. Nor can any candid observer assert that the reintroduction of such symbolism is attended with no element of risk. Yet the remedy is surely not the prohibition of symbolism in religion, but the encouragement in the community of free theological discussion, and the practical recognition of the fact that Divine grace is not confined to traditional symbols or official channels. Symbolism is likely to lead to superstition only in a Church which fetters free discussion, or which denies to those who use a different symbolism the full measure of Divine grace. On the other hand, the maintaining of traditional symbols, whether in doctrine or in ritual, is a valuable check on the possible



loss, through changes in intellectual or aesthetic fashion, of precious elements handed down from the past.

### PREACHING

In a really living Church the knowledge of God which is presupposed in the fact of worship is necessarily progressive, "the Spirit shall lead you into all truth." It involves a growing clarification and purification of all ideals as well as a growing devotion to them. Hence, however perfect the school or adult class system of the community, the element of instruction and exhortation cannot be excluded from public worship without grave loss. A great advance was made by Jewish religion when it supplemented the sacrifices of the Temple by the instruction of the Synagogue. The immensely enhanced importance attached to preaching, and to the public reading of the Scriptures in the vernacular by the leaders of the Reformation was a very similar step. Of late years there has been a tendency in many quarters to disparage the part played by the pulpit in public worship. This is due to two main causes.

(1) The pulpit at the time of the Reformation was the natural centre for political, social and educational activities which now find a more convenient expression elsewhere, in the newspaper, the magazine or the public meeting. Hence at that time the ministry attracted into itself a larger proportion than now of those who felt they had a message for their time. Moreover, the spread of education and the immense increase of reading has brought about a considerable rise in the level of intelligence in the average congregation; there has been, perhaps, a slight but only a very slight rise in the level of education or intelligence in the average clergyman, at least in the Church of England. Hence the growing inclination among the more highly educated laity to insist on short sermons or to avoid them altogether. But the significance of this is discounted by the fact

that a reasonably good preacher usually fills his church. What the laity object to is not preaching, but inferior preaching.

(2) There is a growing feeling that in the ordinary service there is too much talking and too little opportunity for quiet and meditation, and too little recognition of the fact that the religious needs and aspirations of men cannot be fully articulated in words. This, however, again is an objection not to the use but to the abuse of preaching ; and it is quite as much a reaction against the over-articulation of prayer as against the over-emphasis of instruction. Most existing forms of service, it has been already protested, allow too little spiritual initiative to the individual member of the congregation ; but it does not need the abolition of sermons to correct this.

Nevertheless, it is true that the pulpit is a far less effective instrument than it might be for the edification of the pew. This, I believe, is very largely due to the haphazard and unsystematic way in which the subject of a sermon is usually selected. Every preacher should have a definite and carefully thought-out scheme, at least for some weeks in advance, if not for the whole year—of course reserving to himself liberty to depart from it for good reason. In particular, courses of sermons, on subjects previously announced, should be far commoner than at present. Such courses should be varied. Apologetic, devotional or exegetical series should alternate with series of a moral or evangelistic kind. Similarly sermons on missionary topics or social problems should not be, as at present, isolated efforts. Certain definite aspects of the subject should be selected and thoroughly worked out in a course of not less than three addresses.

A connected series on any subject by a man of quite moderate ability will make far more permanent impression than an equal number of isolated sermons by a brilliant speaker. The congregation recall what was

said last time, they look forward expectantly to what will be said next time. They are on the look-out to connect this and that together ; thus, being forced to think, they are more likely to remember. Moreover, when a course on a given subject is announced beforehand, the congregation knows that the preacher is taking his duties seriously. The uncharitable can no longer surmise that the subject of his exhortation is determined by the text that happened to come into his head on Saturday morning while shaving. And a congregation which feels that it is being taken seriously will take the preacher seriously ; it will attend to what he has to say ; and attention is the primary condition of really taking in a lesson. Again, few subjects of any importance can be treated in such a way as to go home to a large audience in a single discourse of a reasonable length. If a man has anything to say, he should be allowed room to say it properly. Lastly, if the preacher commits himself to a course of sermons on a particular theme, he also commits himself to a connected course of serious reading. Nothing is more important in these days than that the minister should keep himself abreast of the best thought of the time ; but, unless his work is so planned that steady reading is not merely a matter of general obligation but also of immediate necessity, it is extraordinarily difficult to spare the time amidst the distraction of other and, at the moment, apparently more urgent calls upon his energies.

This holds good also of the occasional preacher. A change of preacher is a great stimulus to a congregation, a change of audience to a preacher. But here again little good is done by an occasional isolated sermon by an outsider. Ministers should arrange to exchange pulpits for a month or so at a time. Every man who has a real message to deliver sees life and religion to a certain extent from an angle of his own. A man's attitude towards any particular topic is affected by his outlook on things in general. Hence no man can give

the best that he has it in him to give in a single sermon. In a course of sermons he has some chance of making a definite and permanent impression.

There is a very general tradition which keeps Prayer and Preaching apart, as it were, in separate pigeon-holes ; except that in many churches a short prayer is said immediately before the sermon. When the sermon is of an apologetic, doctrinal or exegetical character this is desirable, but not where the subject of the sermon is such as to lead up to prayer. After a sermon on behalf of a hospital, a mission or some similar cause, an evangelistic address, or a discourse on the nature of or the need for prayer, the preacher would be often well advised, at once and without leaving the pulpit, to invite the congregation to pray. He may use extemporary prayer, a series of carefully chosen collects, an appropriate service in litany form, or a form of intercession such as that outlined on pp. 287 *f*. Experience shows that a normal congregation is immensely helped to put more fervour and reality into its prayers when its interest has just been aroused in the object for which prayer is desired. For the same reason, in conducting a short occasional service for intercession, it is often desirable to open with a few remarks designed to collect the attention and focus the interest of those present on the matter in hand.

Much of the effect of many an excellent sermon is lost because something which has been said is misunderstood by some members of the audience, or was so expressed as nearly to meet, but yet just to miss meeting, some special needs or difficulty which they have felt. An after-meeting (in the vestry, the schoolroom, or, where the building is small, in the church itself), in which opportunity is given for a general discussion of the subject of the sermon, and for questions to be put to the preacher, has been found in many cases to be of immense value. An Englishman likes to have his say, and he will take far more notice of what the preacher

has to propound—especially if the subject treated is at all controversial—if he feels that he will have the opportunity afterwards of expressing his own opinion, if he disagrees, or of asking for the reason of anything he does not understand.

Such an after-meeting also solves another real difficulty. An ordinary congregation necessarily includes some who are, or appear to be, persons of quite limited intelligence, and it is a standing temptation of the minister to preach down to their supposed level. The clergy, however, often make the mistake of underestimating the intelligence of the average member of their congregations, and that for a very simple reason. Englishmen are naturally extremely reserved in speaking of religious matters, and more than ever so in the presence of the clergy; moreover, unlike the clergy, they are not trained to use glibly a theological vocabulary. Hence the parson, when he meets them in visiting or otherwise, is struck by their apparently low level of theological intelligence. But many who are poor at expressing themselves on these subjects are extremely acute when they listen. A preacher, therefore, is generally safe in preaching above what seems to him to be the average level of intelligence in his audience. But if by so doing he has succeeded in perplexing a few of the weaker brethren, an after-meeting of the kind described above will meet their case.

The standard of preaching in the Church of England, considering its size and the average level of education of the classes from which the ministry is recruited, is notoriously low. This, however, is only to be expected in view of its present system of clerical education. Those few of the clergy who have taken a theological course at a University, and have then proceeded for a year to a Theological College or some other place of special preparation, have had a training which is probably about as good as that required by,

*e.g.*, the Established Kirk of Scotland ; but these are a small minority. The majority have had a course of professional training lasting for a period which varies from one-half to one-third of that regarded as a minimum in every other considerable denomination.

Besides this, far too much preaching is expected of a man, especially at the start of his ministerial career. In many cases a newly-ordained deacon, fresh from a wholly inadequate preparation, is set to give two, three, or, in rare cases, four sermons or addresses per week. Bad habits, especially if acquired in youth, are commonly lasting. The habit of talking nonsense solemnly is not an exception to this rule. Considering all the conditions, the wonder is, not that the standard of preaching in the Church of England is low, but that it is not lower than is actually the case. But those conditions are alterable, and that they have not been altered before is a standing disgrace to the Church.

### FORMS OF WORSHIP

A Christian community which is fully alive will not be content to express and to feed its religious life through only one or two forms of worship. The Book of Common Prayer in its incomparable beauty is one of the greatest assets of the Church of England, but its rigidity is her greatest burden. A type of service which can recognise the pressing needs of the hour only by the inclusion of a couple of Collects in the course of a service of an hour's duration is inevitably tainted with unreality even in ordinary times, but in a time of desolation and calamity, such as is produced by the present War, it is felt by many to be formal up to the verge of hypocrisy. The very beauty and excellence of the Prayer Book only make attempts at reform the more difficult, for most of the changes proposed seem to most people changes for the worse. Yet there is a growing tendency to try experiments

by omitting portions of the regular service, by complying formally with the law by saying some offices at an hour when no one but the clergy is expected to attend, or by introducing extra and unauthorised services or prayers. But unless far greater liberty of amplification and adaptation is secured, the spiritual life of the Church will be throttled. And it is small consolation to a man who is to be hanged to know that it will be done with a silken cord.

Churches with no fixed Liturgy do not need to vindicate such liberty, but if an outsider may express an opinion, it is one of astonishment that, in spite of the liberty of variation enjoyed, the average service in a Scotch Presbyterian or in an English Nonconformist Church follows so closely certain stereotyped and conventional lines.

No discussion of the best form or forms of congregational worship can be of any value if we allow ourselves to forget what is the object of congregational worship, and wherein it differs from private devotion. This difference seems to me to be summed up in the words of our Lord, "If two of you shall *agree* on earth as touching anything they shall ask." That is to say, it is only in so far as the congregation, or at any rate the majority of those present, are at the same moment concentrating themselves on the same act of devotion that the object of "assembling together" is fully attained. As I have already insisted, where a great multitude is swayed by a united wave of contrition, praise or thanksgiving, each individual has his own capacities, perceptions and powers indefinitely enhanced.

Public worship should give its proper place and proportion to each of the following elements: confession and thanksgiving, prayer, praise and adoration, silent waiting upon God, instruction and exhortation; although it is by no means necessary, as is sometimes assumed, that every service should include them all. It is

important, however, to observe that there is a great difference in the parts played respectively by congregation and minister in the first and in the last mentioned of these. In instruction and exhortation the congregation is in a sense passive; it has merely to listen, though of course with intelligence and attention, to the reading of Scripture or the sermon. The burden of activity is mainly thrown on the preacher or reader. But in confession, thanksgiving, prayer, praise and adoration it is otherwise; the main activity belongs, or should belong, to the congregation. No doubt the minister who reads the liturgy or leads in prayer is himself as active as any other individual member of the congregation, but his function as minister and the object of "the Order of Service" which he is using is to draw out to its fullest extent the active participation of the congregation as a whole.

I believe that one of the reasons why congregations contribute so little concentrated activity to, and carry away so little definite impression from, our average service, is that insufficient attention is given to the important principle of so arranging the variable parts that the service as a whole may strike a single note by setting forth different aspects of a single main idea. The Church of England achieves this end on the great festivals, where Lessons, Psalms, Collect, Hymns and Sermon all centre round one dominant idea. But the same kind of thing should be aimed at every Sunday.

This, of course, raises the question, Is it better to leave the choice of the portion of Scripture entirely to the minister, or to have a prescribed series of Sunday lessons put out by authority, as in the Church of England Prayer Book?

The advantage of the system of free choice of Scripture readings is that, if the preacher feels on any occasion a call to deliver some special message, it is a great advantage to be able to select for reading a passage of Scripture leading up to that particular



message. Its disadvantage is that those members of the congregation who, through lack of education or otherwise, give least time to intelligent private study of Scripture at home—and it is surely this element in the congregation which the instructional part of the service should have mainly in view—are likely at the end of the year to become familiar only with those portions of Scripture, and the teaching deducible therefrom, which happen to appeal to the personal proclivities of one particular minister. On the other hand, a fixed cycle of lessons secures a fuller knowledge of the Scriptures; and probably also a more comprehensive range of Christian teaching, for the experience of the Anglican Church shows that the minister, though in no way bound to preach from the Gospel, Epistle or Lesson for the day, usually does so unless he feels he has some other special message to utter. The selection of Lessons for Sundays actually prescribed in the Anglican Prayer Book is not only in itself a bad selection, but it is one which makes it impossible for the service as a whole to strike any one note, since the lessons from the Old and New Testaments have no relation to one another. But I believe that the principle of a cycle of Scripture readings, if not for the whole year, at least for certain seasons, prescribed by the central authority, is a sound one, though discretion to depart from it should be freely allowed to the minister.

The problem of congregational praise is the one which in ordinary practice would seem to be least far from a satisfactory solution. Experience shows that a well-chosen hymn with a good and simple tune (suited to men's voices as well as to women's or boys'—an important point sometimes overlooked) rarely fails to call forth the hearty and united activity of a whole congregation. I believe also that the practice of singing or saying responsively one or more of the Psalms is of the greatest value, though here again it may be remarked that the actual selection of Psalms for

the day in the Prayer Book is too long and too mechanically conceived.

Adoration, in so far as it can be distinguished from praise, seems to demand two things, (1) some special stimulus to unite the whole gathering in an act of concentrated attention, (2) an interval of silence. In the Catholic scheme of worship this is normally attained by a striking symbolic act, like the Elevation of the Host. It can also be attained by the living voice of the minister inviting those present to concentrated meditation upon some special aspect of the Divine, visualised only to the inward eye of faith. It must, however, be repeated that, though adoration may be possible to an individual in any surroundings, the united adoration of a whole congregation demands both some external stimulus and also an interval (not necessarily a long one) of "silence even from good words"—and from good music also.

The problem of the right use of music in congregational worship is one of the first importance, and it is one which has been by no means solved in ordinary practice; but, lacking technical knowledge of the subject, I prefer to make no definite suggestion. I would, however, venture seriously to question the value of intoning the prayers. In very large buildings it is perhaps desirable, but I am sure there are large numbers of people to whom it is psychologically impossible to pray "upon a note."

It is, however, when we come to consider the subjects of Confession, Thanksgiving and Prayer that the real crux in the problem of congregational worship arises. It may help to clear up the main issues if we endeavour to weigh impartially the comparative merits and defects of the Liturgical type of service, as exemplified in the Anglican Prayer Book, and of the type of extemporary service traditional in most other English-speaking churches.

A Liturgical Service like the Anglican has, at any rate in theory, seven great merits :

(1) The Prayer Book is conspicuous quite as much for the spiritual and devotional quality of its prayers and Collects as for the unsurpassed beauty of its language. To expect a minister to produce, week by week, extemporary prayers which can rival these, is to demand that he shall be at once a spiritual and a literary genius.

(2) The balance of the service, that is, the due proportion given to the various elements of worship, and a considered and comprehensive range in the subjects of intercession, is secured. Thus the service is never in danger of being one-sided, according to the personal predilections of an individual minister. An extemporary service *may* at any time meet the needs and feelings rather of the one man than of a whole congregation.

(3) The congregation knows what is coming next. They know exactly when to attune their minds to confession, petition or thanksgiving as the case may be. This is especially important in the case of intercession. If I am to pray for a person or for a class of persons, I must first think of him or them; and it is far easier to do this if I know beforehand for whom the next petition is to be made, than if one half of my mind is expectant as to whom the minister will mention next, while the other half is thinking of the person last named.

(4) The system of Versicles and Responses gives the congregation an opportunity to join in the prayers in word as well as in heart. Thought and language are so closely associated in the mental activities of the ordinary man, that the act of utterance is psychologically of great value as a help to bringing thought or feeling, as it were, to a head, and making it fully conscious of its own content and of its object. Joining in the Responses helps many to realise more effectively that *activity* of the congregation in petition which, we have urged, it is the main aim of an "Order of Service" to secure.

(5) The element of repose which is so essential to religion is assisted by the very familiarity of noble language consecrated by centuries of Christian devotion as well as by the associations and memories of the individual himself.

(6) An extemporary prayer may at any moment contain something which, either in substance or in language, jars upon any individual, with the result that his mind assumes a critical attitude towards what is being said, which disturbs the current of his devotions.

(7) The use of the same Liturgy is an invaluable bond of union, and a perpetual reminder of the relation of the local congregation to the whole Church.

It must, however, be allowed that, in spite of these merits so obvious in theory, the Prayer Book in practice is disappointing as a manual of ordinary public worship. The human mind rebels against monotony, and, in practice, the result of the continual repetition of so much of the service week after week and year after year is that a large proportion of the members of an average Sunday morning congregation are normally listless and inattentive during the greater part of the service. Moreover, if prayer is to be made a reality, and especially if the members of the congregation who are of a less mature spiritual life are to find it and make it such, it is a vital need of the Church of England to allow greater encouragement and opportunity than is afforded by the Prayer Book to prayers and thanksgivings for the great matters of the current time and for things of local and personal interest.

We turn now to consider the merits and defects of the extemporary form of service. Its outstanding merit is of course its complete freedom and adaptability. Given a minister of real spirituality and a gift of devotional expression (two things which do not necessarily always go together), the congregation is little likely to be listless or inattentive. Moreover, the topic of the hour, the need of the moment, are naturally

and inevitably made a matter for confession, prayer or thanksgiving. The whole service takes on an individual cast, in strong contrast to the stereotyped and, to the young and uneducated, seemingly artificial character of a Liturgical Service.

Its great defect is the demand it makes on the personality and powers of the minister. Where the minister is a man of very exceptional gifts, I believe this type of service elicits far more real response in the way of active participation in worship than the Anglican Offices ; where he is an average man, I doubt whether there is in practice much to choose between the two types ; but where he is even a little below the average, either of spirituality, culture or gift of expression, I believe it is distinctly less satisfactory than a fixed Liturgy.

What is, to my mind, another great defect of the extemporary type of service is one which arises from customary usage, but it is in no way inherent in the type as such. How far the practice is universal I cannot say, but it is certainly the general rule for the central devotional feature to be one long prayer, in which is combined confession, thanksgiving, petition for the needs of those present, and intercession for a wide range of persons and causes. This, I am sure, is psychologically a mistake, in that it makes a demand on the power of strained attention and on the capacity for spiritual concentration on the part of the congregation that can only be met by persons of an advanced stage of religious development, if indeed even by them. To most people intense concentration is always difficult, and this means that prayer, except in exalted moments, is difficult. Moreover, the intensity of concentration can only be sustained for quite a short time.

Hence, if a service is to be conducted in such a way as to make it possible for all to take part in it *up to the maximum of their capacity*, its guiding principle should be "one thing at a time" ; and those parts of

worship which demand the greatest concentration should be broken up by intervals. That is to say, confession, thanksgiving, petition for personal needs, and intercession for others, should not be combined in one long supplication, they should be divided from one another by the other and less exacting elements in the service, such as hymns or Scripture reading. And not only that, but whenever in any of these divisions the congregation is to be invited to pass from one subject to another the change ought not to be sudden, unexpected or hurried. The minister knows beforehand what is to be the next subject of confession or thanksgiving or the next petition, but the mind of the congregation (which in any case moves more slowly than that of an individual) should have notice in advance, and time given for the change; it cannot "switch off," so to speak, from one point to another at the pace set by the minister's prayer. Indeed, to my mind, the main problem of an Order of Service consists in finding out how best to achieve the very necessary principle of concentration on one thing at a time, and of giving due notice of a change of thought—a problem which is, no doubt, solved by a fixed Liturgy, but only at the cost of its fixity, with the accompanying defects already enumerated.

Many of the advantages both of the Liturgical and of the non-Liturgical principle are combined in a method which is being more and more widely used in private devotional meetings of all denominations, in Student Movement camps, and in similar gatherings. For the sake of any of my readers to whom it may be unfamiliar I will indicate its nature.

The person who leads the meeting or conducts the service, selecting first one particular element of worship, for example, confession, will invite those present to join in this act, by some such formula as this: "Let us confess our sins to Almighty God—each one of us in silence acknowledging those sins of which his own

conscience is afraid." Then, after a short pause, he will say, "Let us confess sins of the flesh," "sins of pride," "sins of negligence," "of ignorance," "national sins," etc. etc., with an interval for silence between each. After this he will say a short extemporary prayer or a suitable Collect summing up the act of confession, or he may invite the whole congregation to join in the general confession. The whole act of confession is thus made intensely real and personal to each individual, and at the same time has the added intensity of a corporate act. Thanksgiving and intercession may be dealt with in a similar way, after intervals, during which hymns may be sung or lessons read.

After the interval of silence which follows the mention of the subject of confession, prayer or thanksgiving, it is often better instead of a Collect by the leader to have an appropriate Versicle and Response. The following have been found to be suitable: After a confession: *V.* "Hear us, O Lord, from Heaven"; *R.* "And when Thou hearest, forgive." After a prayer: *V.* "Lord, hear our prayer"; *R.* "And let our cry come unto Thee." After a thanksgiving: *V.* "O give thanks unto the Lord for He is gracious"; *R.* "And His mercy endureth for ever." The opportunity so given for the congregation to sum up, focus and audibly express the subject-matter of their own individual silent prayers, seems to give them a more corporate character, and also makes easier the transition to the next subject to be mentioned by the leader. The occurrence at regular intervals of familiar words of devotion gives to the service some of that restfulness and appeal to a feeling of old association which is one of the advantages of a Liturgical Service, while its monotony is avoided by the freedom of the leader in regard to the choice of topic. Last, but by no means least, this method allows room for that silent waiting on God which, we have seen, is so necessary an element in

corporate worship. Another, though minor advantage of this method, is this. It is often possible, especially in leading a congregation in intercession, to add a word or two of explanation as to the circumstances of the person or the nature of the cause for which prayer is desired. The incongruity of the conventional practice of giving necessary information to the congregation in the course of a long prayer addressed to the Almighty is only thinly disguised by traditional formulae like "Lord, Thou knowest so and so." On the other hand, when each subject of Intercession is separately introduced by "Let us pray for so and so," any necessary explanation can be introduced in this invitation, which is avowedly addressed to the people, instead of in the course of a prayer which professes to be addressed to God.

For services of intercession experience shows that an adaptation to modern needs of the ancient liturgical form of the Litany is of great value, at any rate for occasional use. Well-known instances are the *Litany of Labour* compiled by Dr. Percy Dearmer, and that by Dr. Holland for the Women's Movement, and others have been recently published by the Student Movement. Such Litanies usually differ from that in the Prayer Book in three ways: (1) The petitions are less universal, being directed to some definite modern or local needs, and (2) after each single petition uttered by the minister the congregation respond, "Hear us, O Lord," or the like, whereas in the Prayer Book Litany several objects are usually grouped together before each response—which runs counter to the principle of "one thing at a time," which, it has been urged above, is psychologically so important for the conduct of corporate worship. (3) Additional petitions suggested by the needs of the moment or the circumstances of a particular congregation can be easily introduced.

In occasional services for special objects experiments



of all kinds may be tried, but in the regular Sunday services it is desirable, for the psychological reasons already indicated, that the element of familiarity as well as that of novelty and variety should be aimed at. For this reason I am inclined to think that the backbone, so to speak, of the regular Order of Service should be of a liturgical or partly liturgical character. But the nature and the extent of the liturgical element must necessarily vary according to the traditions of different religious communities. No new or revised "Order of Service" can be the best, or can be even tolerably good, unless it is organically related to and a natural development of the custom and practice of the past. The corporate devotional life of a whole community cannot suddenly be turned into new channels. Hence it is neither possible nor desirable to devise an Order of Service which would be equally suitable for an Anglican or for a Nonconformist congregation. For we must never forget that an Order of Service, however seemingly beautiful or appropriate, ought not to be judged like a work of art, as a thing which has a value in itself. It should be considered merely as a means for helping a congregation to put themselves into that state of mind which *for them* makes communion of the soul with God least difficult; and this depends very largely on the very different significance, meaning and association which particular rites, symbols, words, times, etc., have for different bodies of men and women.

It follows that the working out in practice of the general principles of congregational worship which it has been the aim of this essay to ascertain will vary considerably in different Churches. As an Anglican, I feel that it would be presumptuous on my part to put forward any views as to the practical application in detail of these principles to the conduct of public worship in other Churches. That can only be done for any Church by one who knows its conditions and

traditions from within. The question of Prayer Book reform is one which has been, and is likely for some time to be, under discussion in the Church of England, and no comprehensive treatment of it is possible here. But I hope I may be permitted to offer a few tentative suggestions, which, granted episcopal acquiescence, might be put into practice at once, without waiting on Convocations and Parliament.

The Communion Service is heavily weighted by the Commandments and the unnecessary Collect for the King, who is specifically prayed for again and in a far more appropriate context in the Prayer for the Church Militant. The omission of these would be no more illegal than the universally accepted practice of omitting the longer exhortation, and it is almost as much to be desired. The only other change in this service which is really *necessary* is the substitution of some other Confession for the present form, the language of which cannot be used by most people without a feeling of insincerity; but for that we must be content to wait.<sup>1</sup> Authorised prayers for special needs, persons or occasions would be valuable; but the necessary element of variety and adaptability should be mainly sought by an extension of the practice of mentioning special persons and causes for intercession or thanksgiving before the prayer for the Church Militant.<sup>2</sup> This usage has received a certain amount of official authorisation during the War, and might well be further developed. But the list of names or objects should not be hurried through as at present; intervals of silence should be allowed after the mention of each, so that the persons and causes in question should not merely be named, but also actually prayed for. Longer intervals of silence should also be left in which the congregation should be encouraged not to offer definite petitions or use

<sup>1</sup> The old Sarum Confession, familiar from its use at Compline, would, with the omission of a few words, be the best substitute and would be an immense gain in simplicity and sincerity.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps thanksgivings should be asked for before the Gloria.

manuals of devotion, but simply to meditate or wait upon God.

It is with the service of Morning Prayer, if considered as a Sunday service for an average congregation, that the greatest discontent prevails; though that of Evening Prayer is also widely felt to be in many respects unsuitable for popular use. The part of these services which most hangs fire is all that follows the Third Collect. The practical remedy would seem to be to substitute, at least occasionally, for the Litany or the State Prayers some modern Litany or an Intercession Service of the type that has been previously described. Individual bishops have authorised various Litanies for modern needs for use in certain areas or on certain occasions. A collection of alternative Litanies of this kind, to be used after the "Anthem" hymn, would go a long way towards making of Morning or Evening Prayer a service suitable for popular needs.<sup>1</sup> Probably it would also be well for the minister at his discretion to shorten the first part of the service on Sundays by omitting the Venite, and occasionally even one Lesson and one Canticle, as is already permitted on week days.

The objection felt by most Churchmen to tampering with the Book of Common Prayer is due to their conviction that from a literary point of view any change would be a change for the worse; and the prospect of a patch-work of new and old appeals to few. Certain desirable changes could be made without risk of this result. For instance, a somewhat shorter and less mechanically conceived selection of the Psalms might be devised, from which certain Psalms should be altogether excluded.<sup>2</sup> If printers could be induced to number the Psalms with Arabic instead of with Roman numerals, so that people could quickly find the place, the Psalter could be used like a hymn-book, which

<sup>1</sup> Such a collection, drawn up by the Rev. F. A. Iremonger, Head of the Oxford House, Bethnal Green, is, I understand, to be published shortly by Messrs. Mowbray.

<sup>2</sup> A move in this direction has been made in the American and Scotch revisions of the Prayer Book.

is what it really is. Again, it is undesirable to repeat the Lord's Prayer so often—liturgically its first occurrence is the one to be dispensed with. Lastly, the exhortation, "Dearly beloved brethren," except for the first three words and the final sentence, should always be omitted. In an authorised revision, the rest of the exhortation might be preserved as a kind of "black rubric," admirably summarising as it does the rationale for confession and public worship, and also the unfortunately worded Response to the Versicle, "Give peace in our time, O Lord," might be altered.

Except for changes of this kind, to which few would be likely to object, the first part of the service up to the Third Collect should be kept untouched. But, after the singing of a hymn, it would be a great gain to use, at any rate occasionally, as an alternative to the Litany or State Prayers, a more modern and informal type of service, and it would often be well, for reasons mentioned above (cf. p. 277), to interpolate the Sermon before this second part. The two halves of the service being kept quite distinct, and the second part being a service which made no pretence of being one of the same character, old religious associations would not be hurt, no one would feel that the iconoclast had been at work on an ancient monument, and at the same time the liberty which is essential to the continuance, and still more to the expansion, of the spiritual influence of the Church would be secured.

Ill-conceived forms of worship may cramp or even strangle the spontaneous instincts of religion; well-chosen forms may do much to stimulate them and to guide them in right directions. But we must never forget that the most perfect machinery cannot create life. Unless there exists in a congregation, or at least in a considerable section of it, real religious conviction and a real feeling of spiritual brotherhood and fellowship, no "Order of Service" will suffice to open up to it the full meanings and possibilities of corporate worship.



IX  
THE EUCHARIST—AN ANGLICAN  
VIEW

BY

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## SYNOPSIS

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(1) Truth obscured by false notions ; yet many of these are already discredited, *e.g.* :

- (a) The idea that suffering is the essence of sacrifice.
- (b) That the Eucharist repeats the sacrifice of Calvary.
- (c) The idea of the sacrifice of the Cross or Eucharist as a *substitute* for the sacrifice of heart and will.

(2) Sacrifice, in the sense of some external offering of the consecrated heart and mind and will, is a necessity of human life.

(3) Sacrament and Sacrifice are complementary aspects of one act, which is the act of Love. Jesus Christ is the perfect Sacrament, the perfect Sacrifice, the perfect Priest, and in all this attains the end for which man was made.

(a) Men have shrunk from Sacrifice and Priesthood, in abhorrence of the cruelty and superstition connected with systems past and present.

(b) Yet these evils are only exemplifications of the proverb, *corruptio optimi pessima*, and any system must be judged from the standpoint of its end rather than from that of human origins or false developments.

(c) In Christ alone the end of all Sacrifice and Priesthood can be seen.

(4) LOVE, not Suffering, the essence of Christ's sacrifice, yet Christ necessarily suffered and died in a sinful world, because :

- (a) His life was contrary to the stream of the world's life.
- (b) Death completed His life-long act of self-dedication and service.
- (c) Only by dying could He completely identify Himself with perishing humanity.
- (d) He is therefore not our High Priest as separate from us, "between us and God" but as one with us, as He is one with God.

(5) Since true life therefore is sacrificial, worship if it is to be the expression of life, must be sacrificial too ; our need is to be more thorough-going in our Sacramentalism ; more completely filled with the sacrificial spirit of Christ.

(6) The sacrificial aspect of Eucharistic Liturgies :

- (a) Offering of alms.
- (b) Oblation of the symbols of life's sustenance, joys and sorrows.
- (c) The symbolic breaking and sharing : a setting forth of Christ's death.
- (a) The joyful self-consecration of the worshipper.



## IX

### THE EUCHARIST—AN ANGLICAN VIEW

#### I

IN the past it has been the custom to treat the Eucharist from the side of doctrine and tradition. I propose in this essay to adopt a method more natural to the modern mind, and approach it rather from the side of life.

In some form or another, wherever Christianity is preached, with hardly an important exception, other than the striking case of the Quakers,<sup>1</sup> there is to be found the custom of the breaking and sharing of bread, and the partaking of the common cup as the highest act of worship of the Christian Community. Forms and ceremonies surrounding the central acts vary almost indefinitely. Here you find a beautiful building, elaborate ceremonial, gorgeous vestments, ornate music, all supported by lavish expenditure of money, with a view to rendering the service as magnificent and imposing as may be; there, only the poorest and meanest of buildings, the simplest of tables, round which ministers and worshippers sit together dressed in the ordinary garments of everyday life, to take part in the common meal. Yet beneath this outward

<sup>1</sup> Although the Salvation Army dispenses with ecclesiastical Sacraments, it is, in its elaborate externalism and its insistence on a symbolism of "blood" and "fire," an essentially sacramental body.

variety, which is matched, moreover, by an equal variety in the several expositions of the meaning of the rite, there is to be found this in common, that all alike believe that in what they are doing they are obeying the behests of an historical Personage who lived and died centuries ago ; lived a life of supreme love and self-sacrifice, and passed through death to life. All alike regard the rite as symbolical of the feeding of their souls upon Him, and more than that, as in some degree a means whereby they maintain fellowship with Him and with others who believe in Him. Moreover this fact of our common experience to-day is to be traced back through the ages to the very earliest days of Christianity. It forms, for all who take part in it, whether or not they realise or acknowledge the fact, a link with innumerable personages in all ages who have striven, in their different ways, to love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Critics may and must discuss the question of the historical accuracy of the earliest documents which tell of the institution of the rite ; they may differ, and they do differ widely, as to the influence of non-christian mystery religions on the manner in which the rite is celebrated and regarded. No amount of critical discussion can alter the fact that millions of believers have found and do find in the rite the consolation and uplifting for which their souls hunger. For them it has been a real focus and centre on earth for their highest life, a source of genuine inspiration and strength. They have clung and will cling to the Sacrament with passionate affection, and if for any reason they are deprived of the opportunity of receiving it, they do as a matter of fact feel a deep sense of loss, so that, for instance, men in lonely places of the Australian Bush have been known to come to their Communion, after many years of involuntary excommunication, with tears of joy streaming down their cheeks.

On the other hand, still approaching the subject

from the side of life, rather than from that of theory, it must be frankly admitted that there are probably many regular and faithful Communicants who could not honestly say that when they are cut off for a considerable period from attendance at the Service (whether by illness or by finding themselves far from a Church) they are conscious of any great loss. More than this, it must be recognised that many individuals who have lived lives which may be justly described as Christlike, who have striven to govern their conduct by the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, who have had deep experience of spiritual communion, who have "spent and been spent" in the following of the Christian ideal, have felt no need at all of the Sacraments of the Church.

It would be as futile as it would be dishonest, in these days, to attempt to account for such lives as these from the standpoint of the theory of uncovenanted grace, by which Churchmen of past generations have sought to explain the indisputable facts. These faithful souls have passed—let us gladly and unhesitatingly admit it—what is, after all, the supreme test, the only test of the Gospels, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Indeed to ignore or minimise this would be just as wrong as to attempt to explain away the equally cogent facts of sacramental experience to which we have already referred.

It would seem then to the plain mind to be the obvious truth that sacraments are "generally necessary to salvation," not in the sense of being essential to every individual believer, but in the sense of being necessary for the life of the Church as a whole, and possibly for the highest spiritual life of the average earnest Christian. It may even be justly argued that those faithful Christians who, with an honest and good heart, have not been led to value or use sacraments, or have revolted against false sacramental doctrines, probably none the less owe more to the Sacrament than they

themselves realise.<sup>1</sup> Nothing more than this can rightfully be insisted on.

## II

I proceed to the somewhat fuller consideration of some of the principles involved in the sacramental position.

## (I)

We have seen that those who believe in the Eucharist agree that, in what they do, they are obeying the behest and following the custom instituted by our Lord Himself, and therefore we may begin by remembering that the Synoptists and St. Paul alike lay stress on the fact that the Eucharist was instituted by our Lord in the same night in which He was betrayed. It stands therefore traditionally as at once the climax of His life and the introduction to His passion and death, and when we examine the words and actions of our Lord at the Last Supper as they are reported, it is clear that His whole life and teaching, the whole meaning of His approaching death, are in some sense summarised and dramatically represented in the Sacrament. He lived that men might have more abundant life. He died that death might not destroy life. He was and is the Bread of Life. Men live by sharing His life. A loaf, to become available as food, must be broken and

<sup>1</sup> It is plain that however much the Society of Friends, for instance, repudiates ecclesiastical Sacraments, for reasons which seem to it unanswerable, yet that Society and the Historic Church act and react upon one another continually. The Historic Church undoubtedly owes much to the Society; the Society, equally undoubtedly, owes much to the Historic Church. Moreover, the essential point to remember is that the founders of the Society were mystics so strongly imbued with the fundamentally sacramental character of the universe as to feel no need of special sacramental ordinances. Among modern members of the Society there are undoubtedly some who have moved away from the mysticism of their forefathers in the direction of a benevolent, philanthropic Unitarianism, of a markedly less spiritual type, but I am told that among others there is a very real spiritual revival. A friend of my own, himself a member of the Society, has told me that many who have left the Society in recent years have become either Roman Catholics or Anglicans of a pronounced sacramentarian type, and that, on the other hand, a considerable number of Catholics (Roman or Anglican) have become members of the Society.

shared. It is indeed bread objectively in virtue of its life-giving properties, but until it is shared and appropriated it might as well be a stone. The loaf fulfils itself in being destroyed that those who feed upon it may live by so doing. Even so the divinely human life of Jesus was throughout consecrated to be the spiritual food of others, and through its own destruction as a merely individual life became available for the feeding of perishing humanity.

It is commonly said by those who hold most firmly to a belief in the Sacraments that they are an extension of the Incarnation. Rightly understood, there is undoubtedly an important truth in this statement, for the Incarnation is indeed the central Sacrament, wherein the inward and spiritual Logos, the Eternal Son of God, is revealed by the use which He makes of the outward and visible material body in which He is incarnate, and of all the material world, which was from one point of view only an extension of that body, as that body was but a portion of the material universe. Yet two things must be noted in regard to this statement: first, that the Incarnation itself is to be understood, not simply as an unique event in the history of the world, but rather as, to use Dr. Illingworth's phrase, "the climax of immanence in the world"; and secondly, that the extension of the Incarnation in the Eucharist does not mean, as is not infrequently implied in crude statements of the doctrine of the Real Presence, something like a new incarnation of the Lord within the material used in the Sacrament, but rather that the Sacrament itself gains all its meaning from the fact that it is part of the Self-expression of the Eternal Word, who manifested Himself supremely in the Historic Life, words and deeds of Jesus, who still lives and still, as ever, uses the outward and visible as vehicles of His presence and His power. It is the association of the Eucharist with the eternal life of Jesus, and His historic life and death, His remembered acts and words,

His whole outlook upon the material world, and His redeeming use of material things, His continual presence in the world, His Spirit abiding in His Church—revealed unmistakably in the lives of all the saints of all the ages, who have fed their souls in sacramental fashion upon the bread of life,—it is all this, and much more beside, which gives to the Sacrament its unfathomable meaning and power of attraction, for those who have come, as a result of wise teaching and earnest meditation, to make it the centre of their social and individual worship and therefore of their lives.

Bread and wine are indeed natural symbols of the life of God and man, of common human needs and their supply, of God's blessing upon human aspirations and endeavour. Bread broken and wine shared are natural tokens of a life received from and consecrated to God, spent in feeding the hungry, surrendered even unto death for the salvation of others. But it is in virtue of the supreme associations of the Eucharistic Bread and Wine and not in virtue of any magical change in their substance that they become a focus for man's attention to the divine life, which is the fount of all true human life, and the means whereby he feeds upon that life.<sup>1</sup>

The Eucharistic Bread and Wine remain after consecration bread and wine still, but they are no longer *mere* bread and wine. In virtue of their solemn consecration for their special purpose; in virtue of the historical and spiritual associations into which they have been taken; in virtue of the power of the living Lord

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. Scott Palmer, *The Diary of a Modernist* (Arnold), pp. 300 ff. The whole passage contains an extraordinarily illuminating and suggestive treatment of the Sacraments and especially of the Eucharist. Cf. also an admirable article by Canon Adderley on "Sacraments and Unity," in the *Hibbert Journal*, July 1914. Canon Adderley says: "The flag as a symbol was, I believe, given as an instance by Zwinglians of what they meant by a symbolical sacrament. The relative importance attached successively to a piece of bunting in a draper's shop, then cut into the shape of a Union Jack, then carried into battle and fought for, or exhibited in Paris during the King's visit, is very much like the relative importance of a wafer or a piece of bread in a church shop, then brought to the Credence table, then consecrated, then partaken of or perhaps carried in procession on Corpus Christi day."

to use material things for spiritual ends, as real to-day as ever before, this Bread and Wine become effectual symbols of the true life of man, effectual because through thankfully receiving them, with repentance and faith, men do indeed renew and nourish their true life.<sup>1</sup>

(2)

The Eucharist, thus associated with the Incarnation, comes to confirm man's instinctive appreciation of the sacramental character of the universe. It at once illuminates, and is illuminated by that profound sense which invades every man, at all events at some moment or moments of his life, that all outward and visible things partly hide and partly reveal—would completely reveal, if he could only reach to and comprehend their whole significance—the secret life of the universe. This sense is found more highly developed in some men than in others. It is of course highly characteristic of certain poets and philosophers, but is found, in a measure, in quite unlearned and ignorant men. For, as all Christians believe, all life is indeed sacramental; the inward is ever seeking to reveal itself in and through the outward. The spirit is ever using matter as its instrument and compelling it to subserve its own purpose. Sacramentalism from this point of view safeguards a large and sane view of the relation between spirit and matter, which is essentially Christian. On the one hand it escapes the danger of a false spiritualism, fundamentally Manichean in outlook, which would regard matter as somehow essentially evil, and spirit as that which is opposed to it. On the other hand, sacramentalism is no less opposed in principle to materialism since it regards matter as serving its true purpose only when, and in so far as, it subserves the purposes of the spirit.

<sup>1</sup> It has been pointed out that the symbolism of the cup of wine has largely lost its significance for a nation such as our own, in which wine is not, as in so many other nations, the common drink of the people.

## (3)

The third principle underlying sacramental worship in general, and the Eucharist in particular, is this, that human language, fashioned as it has been for other purposes, has always proved itself inadequate as a means of expressing spiritual aspiration and experience. Language needs to be supplemented by action, and for this very reason no sacramental action can ever be wholly translated into, or explained in, words. All attempted verbal expression involves limitation. When I try to put into words the deepest experiences of my life, I find that, do what I may, the expression remains inadequate, I attain at most to hints and suggestions which will convey more or less of my meaning ; but there remains always more to be uttered than words can utter. I may go further than words (and the more deeply I feel the more spontaneously I shall do so) and attempt by tones and gestures to convey a more vivid impression of the thing experienced or the thing I want to make others experience. The great prose-writer, and still more the poet, continually extends the domain of language as the means of self-expression. But even so language needs to be supplemented by drama, and even more by painting and the plastic arts, and supremely by music. All of which arts are rightly consecrated to the highest of all ends when they are used in the attempt to express the deepest truths of the Spirit. ^

And here another consideration, as important as it is often forgotten, arises and helps to explain the variety of usage in regard to the administration of the Sacrament to which attention has already been called. The power of expression through gesture and even more through art, and the power of interpretation of gesture and of art, vary almost indefinitely among men of different races and different temperaments. To some a wealth of gesture comes spontaneously ; others find themselves



normally able to do but little to represent feeling by dramatic action, though the majority even of these undemonstrative folk, under the influence of some overpowering emotion, attempt at some time or another to express their feelings in the action which is more expressive than words.<sup>1</sup> But the points I want to make here are three :—First, some dramatic, artistic sacramental method of expression is natural to all men. Secondly, the deeper the spiritual experience the more certain it will be to express itself somehow in the action that supplements and transcends language. Thirdly—a point worth remembering by those to whom sacraments seem most natural—some people are slow to express themselves dramatically, and, even when moved to do so, are apt to restrain gesture to a minimum ; accordingly, when confronted by dramatic representation of spiritual truth and experience, some men of a more spontaneously and exuberantly artistic and sacramental turn of mind will respond naturally to an elaborate externalism such as may be seen in High Mass, whereas others will as naturally expect and appreciate only the most restrained and simple ceremonies such as may be found in the simplest breaking of the common loaf and sharing of the common cup. In this as in many other directions the passion of small minds for uniformity has helped to obscure the true ideal of unity in diversity.<sup>2</sup>

### III

A further principle, as universal in its application as the three preceding, and intimately associated with them, is the principle of priesthood and sacrifice. This

<sup>1</sup> It is worth while remarking that many quite simple and undemonstrative folk find the dramatic action of the Consecration in the Eucharist an immense help to attention.

<sup>2</sup> It is often said that the Englishman is naturally reserved. It may be doubted whether this is strictly true. The reserve of the average educated Englishman is probably due more largely to nurture than to nature ; and the convention of our public schools, which brands as "bad form" any sort of religious exuberance, has its bad as well as its good side.

principle it is necessary to treat at rather greater length than the preceding ones, for here more than anywhere else the prevalence among Christians of false notions has hindered the acceptance of the unifying truth. Men have disputed endlessly as to whether the Eucharist has or has not a sacrificial aspect. Critics are divided as to whether or no the words of institution as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels and St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians have or have not a sacrificial meaning, and both these controversies are rendered the more hopeless by the fact that men on opposite sides use the terms "priesthood" and "sacrifice" with almost totally different associations.<sup>1</sup>

Nor is there any possibility of men coming to agree upon the question until certain wrong notions are put for ever out of court. But it is true to say that some of these wrong notions, once widely accepted and taught, are already relegated by the best thought of our age to the past. We have been taught nowadays, in the first place, to recognise that it is not in the suffering and death of our Lord as such that the essence of the sacrifice is to be found, but rather in the willing and joyful self-oblation of a consecrated manhood. The suffering was indeed "necessary," but it resulted from the making of that joyful offering in the midst of a world that refuses to make it. Again, no accredited theologian now thinks of the sacrifice, which was indeed consummated by our Lord on the Cross, as in any sense repeated in the Eucharist; nor, as we shall see, is that

<sup>1</sup> The writer of this essay feels bound to confess his own conviction that, taking the records as they stand, the biblical witness is altogether on the side of a sacrificial interpretation of the Eucharist. He finds himself in complete agreement with a recent writer. "What is represented as our Lord's language was calculated to imply that the broken bread and cup bore the same relation to His Sacrifice that the flesh of the victim was conceived as bearing to its sacrifice—a relation which in the minds of the disciples was one of effectual and not only didactic symbolism. We are wholly unjustified in assuming that our Lord is represented as using misleading language, and we must conclude in favour of effectual symbolism. It may be noted in passing that the bread and wine are there called Body and Blood as effectual symbols of Christ as our Sacrifice, not merely as symbols of His Body and Blood." W. Spens, *Belief and Practice*, Lecture X., p. 159 (Longmans & Co.). The present essay was written before the appearance of Mr. Spens' book.

sacrifice thought of as consisting in anything other than the offering (an offering necessarily expressing itself in visible acts) of a completely consecrated Will, a Will wholly set on the service of God and man, in and through every experience of life and death; nor, above all, are either the sacrifice of the Cross or the Eucharist regarded as substitutes for that sacrifice of heart and will in the service of God and man to which every Christian is pledged in baptism, and to which he undoubtedly pledges himself over and over again in the Eucharist.

In England, as elsewhere, Catholics and Protestants have contended fiercely concerning the Christian doctrine of sacrifice. Until recent years the point at issue was quite plain. On the one hand, Protestants have been wont to maintain that true Christianity knew nothing of any sacrifice except the one "full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice" of the Cross. They have denied strenuously that the Eucharist had any sacrificial aspect or meaning whatsoever. On the other hand, Catholics have fought at least as vehemently for the recognition of the Eucharist as a veritable sacrifice, in the fullest sense of the term. Each side has claimed our Lord's words as conclusive proof of the truth of its own view. Each side has appealed to history. Catholics have been wont to claim not merely that the Eucharist is a sacrifice but that the doctrine of transubstantiation was universally believed in the primitive Church. Protestants have claimed as vehemently that that doctrine was a medieval accretion upon the truth of the Gospel, and that it found no more justification in the writings of the fathers than in the Scriptures themselves.

It would be as wearisome and indeed, within the limits of an essay, as impossible, as it is happily unnecessary, to reopen these old controversies.

The inadequacy of the traditional theories of either party to explain the Eucharistic rite is witnessed by

the fact that good and earnest men pass constantly from either camp to the other and increasingly away from both. This surely means that while there is right on both sides we have really outgrown both traditional theories. If we are to attain to a more adequate theory we must, I think, start from the recognition that sacrifice, in the sense of some sacramental offering of the consecrated heart and mind and will to God, which includes, since God has deigned to be incarnate in man, a joyful dedication of the individual life to social and universal ends, is the deepest necessity of human life. For this very reason that form of social worship which is most likely to summarise and express and at the same time raise, widen and deepen the life of the worshippers, must somehow or other take on this aspect of sacrifice.

*From the point of view of corporate social worship sacrament and sacrifice are complementary one to the other, or rather are complementary aspects of what is really one act. That essential act is the communion of the human soul with God and its fellow-men. While man is in the flesh and the inhabitant of a material world from which he cannot escape, that communion can best be effected by the use of material means charged with spiritual meaning. When we speak of a sacrament we think of that act as God's approach in love and power to the human soul He desires to save. When we speak of a sacrifice we think of that same act as man's response to the love of God.*

The universe is sacramental on this view, because God is for ever seeking to impart Himself to man through the outward and visible. In man the universe becomes sacrificial, because man's true spiritual attitude of self-oblation and his deep desire to consecrate all life to God must express itself in outward and visible acts of sacrifice. Sacrament and sacrifice are thus alike the language and the art transcending human words in which love expresses itself. They are, so to speak,

love, divine and human, in action. Jesus Christ is at once the perfect Sacrament and the perfect Sacrifice. In Him God perfectly expressed Himself to His creatures, perfectly gave Himself to man, so that they, just in so far as their eyes were open in virtue of the desire to attain the true end of life, saw and welcomed and accepted Him. Jesus Christ is the life-giving Sacrament of God. He is also the perfect sacrifice. The "Eternal Spirit" through whom "He offered Himself without blemish unto God" was the spirit of filial love answering perfectly to that self-giving love which was and is the Father's.

And as He was and is the perfect Sacrifice, so He was and is, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews insists, the perfect High Priest of Humanity. The essence of priesthood is simply the bringing of all human life and indeed of all creation to its true end—making it "at one" with God. Priesthood is as natural as love. Every man fulfils himself as man just in so far as he becomes a priest. Wherever among men there is love the essentially priestly work of "at-onement" goes forward.<sup>1</sup> The end will be attained when humanity has become "a kingdom of priests," each man helping to raise his fellow-man to God, and so all creation has become at one with its Maker through man, who is the "crown of creation" and the priest of the universe. It remains, of course, to relate all this on the one hand to the death upon the Cross, and on the other to the Eucharist, and this we shall later on attempt to do; but no one, we believe, can really understand the passionate clinging of earnest Catholics to the word Sacrifice, as descriptive of the Eucharist in one of its aspects, who does not approach it from this point of view.

<sup>1</sup> The theory of priesthood in the Church is the solemn setting apart to an official priesthood of those who have not only felt the call themselves to priestly work, but have been proved by examination to be men who are already "natural priests": fitted, as they are themselves desirous, to lead their fellow-men to God and reveal God to their fellow-men.

It may doubtless be argued that in interpreting the words sacrifice and priesthood as I have done I have evaded the real difficulty, the real source of the prejudice which lingers in so many minds against speaking of the Eucharist as a sacrifice and of its minister as a priest. It is undoubtedly true that to some minds the word sacrifice still suggests holocausts of innocent victims, animal or human, torrents of blood vainly and superstitiously poured forth before a deity whose wrath towards his creatures can only so be turned aside. They picture a deity gloating over the passion and death of the slain, feasting upon the offerings burnt on his altars. Moreover, quite apart from the question of holocausts or false views of sacrifice, there are many who look upon "sacerdotalism" as, it is hardly too much to say, the one evil, or at least the worst of evils. They associate with the human priest cunning, deceit and cruelty, arrogance and false pretensions, superstition, narrowness, intolerance and a persecuting temper.

Now we may grant that the worst that has been said or written of the evils of priestcraft and sacrifice is abundantly justified by the facts of history. No evil among men can be worse than the evil of a perverted sacerdotalism or a degraded worship, for these have the power to poison the central springs of human life. It is no wonder, then, that earnest reformers have striven over and over again to cast out from the Church every trace of ceremonial sacrifice and have passionately denied the right of any human being to call himself a priest. But the fact remains that hitherto they have always striven in vain. Temporary success has always been followed by the inevitable reaction. The institution and the name have persisted in spite of all abuses and all reformations. And this, surely, is so because the principles of priesthood and sacrifice are really rooted in true human needs and are therefore really of divine origin. The appalling evils which have arisen in con-

nection with them, which every earnest and faithful soul must indeed abhor, only illustrate after all the adage *corruptio optimi pessima*.

True priesthood and true sacrifice, as we have tried to show, must ever be an essential part of the Church's life, while spirit is compelled to express itself through matter. And in judging these institutions one must accept the principle, which is indeed of universal application, that it is not possible to judge rightly unless you judge from the point of view of the end to which the highest line of development leads, rather than by dim human origins or by false, and for that very reason temporary, developments. The attempt to form a true judgment from the standpoint of the cruelties and superstitions of the past, or even of the ignorance and stupidities of the present, is really as irrational as would be the attempt to form a true judgment of the value of human life by study of *Eoanthropus Dawsoni* or the pre-human primates from which he and his distant cousin the chimpanzee are alike descended, or of the debased and degenerate specimens of humanity which may be found in any country and in any age. Judging from the standpoint of earthly origins and false developments we must condemn equally all religion, all science, all civilisation and indeed all life.<sup>1</sup> The end of priesthood

<sup>1</sup> It should not be forgotten that it is quite possible to overestimate the cruelties of the ancient systems of sacrifice. There is a tendency in certain quarters to dwell with exaggerated horror on the shedding of the blood of innumerable beasts in the temples of old. Among the ancient Mediterranean peoples flesh food was a luxury only to be enjoyed on special occasions. Whenever, therefore, an animal was killed for food it was natural to offer part of it to the deity. We are apt to forget that civilisation has even now hardly done more than put asunder what was once united: the slaughter of animals and the worship of God. Our priests are no longer our official butchers, our temples no longer reek with blood and the smoke of the sacrifice; but we, no less than the worshippers of old, feed upon the bodies of the slain, and in every kitchen throughout the land the smoke ascends which once went up only from the sacred fires. We keep in the background of life that which once held too prominent a place in the foreground. We have, to a very limited extent, succeeded in finding more humane methods of slaughter, and we have banished the remembrance of it from our temples; but it takes place all the same, and physically as well as spiritually we live upon the bodies of the innocent slain.

In regard to the Old Testament sacrifices it should be noted that the emphasis is never laid on the DEATH of the victim. The death was regarded as the necessary

and the end of sacrifice—by which these institutions are to be judged—can only be seen in Christ, and it may be asserted that through all historical priesthood and sacrifice humanity is groping, always dimly, often erroneously, but, wherever a good and self-denying priest or worshipper is to be found, truly and faithfully, toward that perfect end.

We may now pass on to a somewhat fuller consideration of the meaning of the sacrifice of the Cross. It is essential to an understanding of the work wrought on Calvary that it should be regarded simply as necessary, in a sinful world, to a life of perfect love.<sup>1</sup>

Perfect filial love manifests itself in perfect obedience, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," and that doing of the will of the Father, Who is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"<sup>2</sup> necessarily implies a love no less perfect and complete for those whom "God our Saviour" desires to "come to the knowledge of the truth,"<sup>3</sup> the saving truth of love as the secret of life. The sin of the world, first and last, was and is the refusal of love, and the refusal of love, the only evil, always issues in suffering and death, the suffering and death of innocence. He who would live a life of love in a world of sin "must needs suffer" just because he finds himself in opposition to the whole current of the world's life. For the life of "the worldly world" is built up upon a basis of selfish desires and ambitions; whether of individuals or of whole classes of men. Its privileged classes are those who have most successfully exploited the weaknesses of their brother men. Its very priesthoods consist, too often, of those who have gained power at

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means towards getting the blood which was held to be the seat of life. The blood, of the beast without blemish, sprinkled on the altar signified the offering of a spotless life; sprinkled on the people it signified the imparting to them of the spotless life accepted by Yahweh. Cf. Leviticus xvii. 11, 14, and Exodus xxiv. *passim*.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood*, p. 163. "It is because of the war and violence, the struggle, stain, and sin of the world that sacrifice must mean death."

<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter iii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 4.



the expense of their fellows, by trading upon their superstitions rather than ministering to their true needs. Its temples are too often dens of thieves. In such a world the spirit of love is for ever being crucified, and he who incarnates that spirit must needs suffer in the flesh. The life of perfect love was bound to end in passion and in death.<sup>1</sup> So Jesus saw with that perfect intuitive vision which goes with love. "The Son of Man must suffer" is the burden of His later teaching, and of the teaching of the Apostles after Him.<sup>2</sup>

No doubt the joy of accomplishing the mission entrusted to Him by the Father was the inspiration of all His sacrifice. But none the less that joy, during all His ministry, lay in its fullness on the other side of death. It was for the joy that was set before Him that He endured the Cross, despising the shame (Heb. xii. 2). The fullness of joy was not possible until the work of salvation had been accomplished. It was not accomplished until the perfect death had sealed the ministry of the perfect life. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives two further reasons for the death of the Cross to which attention may briefly be called. First he points out that death was necessary, because death makes for ever impossible a change of attitude, which is always possible (however unlikely) while mortal life lasts. A testator while he lives may always revoke his will: death alone makes that revocation impossible (Heb. ix. 16 ff.). And again the suffering and death were a necessity for one who would share to the uttermost all the tragic experiences of suffering humanity—apart from sin. Perfection in Sonship for Him, as for them, was only possible through suffering. He could not be a High Priest, taken from among men, able to sympathise with them in all the sad

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Rep.* ii. 361 E ἐροῦσι δὲ τάδε, ὅτι οὕτω διακείμενος ὁ δίκαιος μαστιγώσεται, στρεβλώσεται, δεδήσεται, ἐκκαυθήσεται τῷ φθαλμῷ, τελευτῶν πάντα κακὰ παθὼν ἀνασχινδυνευθήσεται καὶ γινώσεται ὅτι οὐκ εἶναι δίκαιον ἀλλὰ δοκεῖν δεῖ ἐθέλειν.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mark viii. 31, ix. 12; Luke xxiv. 46; Acts iii. 18, etc.

experiences of life in the sinful world unless He, *like* them, with them, and for them, suffered and died. Thus, though from the ideal standpoint the essence of sacrifice is the response of love to love, in a world of sin, and suffering caused by sin, the element of suffering looms large in the sacrifice of love, and the Gospel becomes a Gospel of life out of death, life more abundant, life eternal, life filled with redemptive power through that eternal spirit of sacrifice whereby Christ offered Himself unto and through death for the world.

He is our High Priest, and He is our sacrifice, not because He is separate from us, "between us and God," but because He is one with us as He is one with God, and every true priest and true Christian is Christlike in this respect. Once again the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews illuminates this point. There, as Professor Nairne has pointed out, priesthood and sacrifice are treated as part of the eternal constitution of things. There is an eternal priesthood, and an eternal Spirit of sacrifice of which the Levitical Priesthood was but a shadow—that of Melchizedek the truer type. Jesus is both High Priest and sacrifice because in His life and His death this eternal spirit finds its perfect expression.

And the whole life and death of Jesus have therefore this sacrificial aspect. He lived to God for others. The sacrament, which is of His institution, and is the dramatic summary of His life and death of sacrifice is, in this wide and general sense, sacrificial, because it is part of the self-expression of Jesus. The "Bread of Life" is sacrificial bread; the wine of life is blood shed for others. And the Christian is only a true Christian so long and in so far as he is a sharer in the eternal Spirit of Christ. If, then, his life must be essentially sacrificial, it follows inevitably that the worship in which he takes part must (if it is, as it should be, all one with, and the expression of, that which is most fundamental in his life) be sacrificial too. The eternal spirit of

sacrifice must inevitably and in every department of life, express itself outwardly ; and, since "Worship" is only the social consecration of life, the same spirit will necessarily express itself in external acts there as everywhere else. All the mischief which is the real occasion of controversy and division, arises, if what has been said is true, from man's constant temptation to put asunder that which God has joined together. That, indeed, is the whole essence of sin, that sin which destroys the unity wrought by perfect love. On the one hand, in this case, men preach a sacrifice which is vicarious in the sense of being a substitute for life, and not an expression of life ; on the other hand, they are so anxious to insist that it is the life which must be sacrificial that they treat worship as though it were not part of life at all ; as though there alone the sacrifice must be absent. "There is no prevailing sacrifice except that of Jesus Christ," they say, forgetting that Jesus Christ identified Himself with us, is taken from among us, that we are sharers of His Spirit, and so, when we are most true to Him, are most fundamentally and thoroughly sacrificial.

Our real need is, in fact, to be more complete and thorough-going in our sacramentalism ; so to worship Him that we may become more completely inspired by the sacrificial Spirit ; so to live that there may be less and less contrast between our moments of corporate worship, and our daily life in the world. The religion of Jesus was wholly and completely sacramental ; but the sacraments of Jesus were not sacramental moments in a non-sacramental life, as has too often been the case among those who have insisted most vehemently on the reality of sacramental grace and the sacrificial aspect of the chief sacramental act of worship. In proportion as we attain to the height and depth and width of the religion of Jesus, our life and our religion will become unified on a sacramental and sacrificial basis.

It remains to relate these general truths a little more

closely to the Eucharistic rite of the Church. The object of that rite may be variously stated, but howsoever the rite is celebrated it must surely miss its object unless it serves to strengthen and deepen in the hearts of the worshippers that divine self-giving love towards God and man in which the Christ-life consists. To hold communion with God is to receive that life. From the standpoint of Christian philosophy, the true end of the whole material universe is to minister to the conscious and joyful communion of the created with his Creator, for in that communion alone life attains its true meaning and value. We come then to the Eucharist, believing that in Jesus Christ that end was perfectly attained ; that those who come to Him in faith and love, willing to do at all costs the Father's will, do indeed enter into closest communion and fellowship with their Lord and Master, and when they receive the effectual symbols of the broken Body and outpoured Blood of the Lord do indeed nourish within themselves that divine humanity, which is theirs for the asking just because it is His : "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . preserve thy body and soul unto Everlasting Life." Receiving the sacrament in faith they do indeed feed upon the sacrifice with a reality and power, of which the feeding upon the Levitical sacrifices by the worshippers of old was the ineffective shadow. The sacramental side of the act is plain beyond dispute. No less plain to the writer of this essay is the sacrificial side ; for to him, as has been already urged, man's sacrifice is only the necessary human response to God's sacrament.

In all Eucharistic services of a "Catholic" type the sacrificial spirit finds its necessary expression in several ways. There is the offering of alms, a symbol of the consecration of all the worldly goods of the worshipper to the service of God and man. There is the "oblation" of bread and wine, an outward sign that all which nourishes and sustains life, and no less all life's joys and

all life's sorrows (of which the cup has so often and so naturally been taken as the symbol), are only rightly used and rightly enjoyed when they are consecrated to the service of Him from whose hand they are received. There is, further, in the act of the breaking of the bread a solemn setting forth before God and man of the life of sacrifice, the offering even unto death, made by Jesus Christ upon the Cross of Calvary, the offering which because it was made for all is available for all. Finally, there is the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the offering of "ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice" unto the Father. The Eucharistic self-oblation of the individual in love to God for social and universal ends is thus, from the human side, the climax of the whole Service.

The Service, it only remains to add, does indeed in countless cases justify itself as sacrament and sacrifice in the lives of the faithful, the open-eyed, the loving-hearted, among its worshippers. But it must be sorrowfully admitted that the strongest argument against the position here maintained must ever be the failure of many—indeed in the last resort of all—communicants to attain to the height and breadth and depth of a life which is, as has been said, their true life. Never will the Eucharist be rightly understood or its power really appropriated until communicants realise far more vividly than they have in the past the social character of the life of love to which they have dedicated themselves by participation in the sacrament. The real task lying before the Church in this age is to emphasise that the sacraments pledge the Church as a whole, and every one of its individual members, to a life of social service. When the world sees the spirit of love unifying the Church as a whole and providing, not a dull uniformity of worship, but a unity embracing a wide variety of types of Eucharistic Service, each in its own way helping individuals of diverse temperaments and gifts to realise themselves by finding each one

the particular branch of social service in the world which is his true vocation, then it will come to believe in the divine mission and the divine power of the Church, then the Christ "lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Him."



X

THE EUCHARIST—  
A FREE CHURCH VIEW

BY

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## SYNOPSIS

- I. In Free Church life and thought the place of the High Mass is taken by the sermon.  
The sermon as the living, prophetic word is on a higher level than the Sacrament.
- II. The Free Church view of the Sacrament is dominated by the conception of the Church as the company of believers.  
The Sacrament expresses, not creates, the life of the Christian community, and by expressing intensifies.
- III. The Eucharist in the New Testament and early Church both before and after the Last Supper.  
Christ probably instituted no new rite.  
Lack of continuity between the Last Supper and "the breaking of bread."  
The essence of the rite.
- IV. Free Church practice and a modern interpretation.

## X

### THE EUCHARIST—A FREE CHURCH VIEW

THE first object of this paper is to explain to friends in the Church of England the kind of way in which some of the younger men in the Free Churches are coming to regard the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

I. This Sacrament is not central in our Free Church life as it is in the lives of those many Anglicans to whom the sacrifice of the Mass makes the supreme appeal. High Mass, when only the few partake of the elements, is, I take it, pre-eminently an act of adoration ; the supreme moment is the elevation of the Host. It would take away much of the present misunderstanding between us if Anglicans would realise that in Free Church life and thought the place of the High Mass is taken by the sermon. Our sermons, well I know it, are often lamentable enough and far from our ideal ; but in theory the sermon is with us neither a moral diatribe nor an exhibition of the preacher's views upon religion, but a setting forth of Christ—crucified and risen ; it is in very truth an elevation of the Host. Preaching is to be distinguished from prayer in this, that while in prayer man is speaking to God, in preaching God is speaking to man once again through the human but prophetic voice. The sermon may be cast into such form as to stir the conscience or to kindle faith or love or courage or hope ; but it is ever the elevation of the Host, and its end is

adoration and praise, penitence and comfort. The sermon is the spoken word, the High Mass is the visible ; there are diversities of manifestation but the same Word, the same Good News. Preaching is a prophetic exercise, an *inspired* utterance, a work of the Holy Spirit moving continually in the Church ; preaching is therefore a means of grace ; preaching and the Bible, the spoken and the written word, are the supreme means of grace and on a higher level than the Sacrament. "God is assuredly nearer in the Gospel than Christ in bread and wine,"<sup>1</sup> said Luther ; and again, "A man can well be saved (*selig*) without Mass, but none without God's word."<sup>1</sup>

II. Generally, then, for Free Churchmen the Communion Service is less central than for Anglicans ; and because it is less central it has been less the subject of our theological reflection ; of theological speculation upon the Eucharist in our Churches since Dale I know of little.

There is no one view common to all Free Churchmen ; indeed wide divergencies of view are to be found in the Free Churches. I imagine there will be not a few who believe that the elements, the bread and the wine, "contain grace." Many would say that "worthy receivers outwardly partaking of the visible elements of this Sacrament do then also inwardly, by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all benefits of His death."<sup>2</sup>

Others hold the view which is vulgarly called Zwinglian ; for these the Service is primarily "in memory of Me." Of course it is not ever regarded as the memorial feast at the tomb of, or in memory of, some dead hero or ancestor. Christ is ever the living, present Lord ; but the virtue of the institution is conceived to lie in this that by its appeal to the senses and to the inward conscience it ever recalls and sets

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Die Abendmahlsnot*, Baumgarten, pp. 37 and 39.

<sup>2</sup> Savoy Declaration.

before the mind and heart the great sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

To many, I am afraid, the Sacrament means very little; they do not stay to it.<sup>1</sup> If pressed for their view, they would probably say that they see no use and find no help in outward forms: they agree in the main with the Quakers. Naturally enough the vast majority of humble believers have no theory at all; they come because in fact they find this is often the most solemn and uplifting experience which in their normal Christian life they know; it speaks to the heart.

The Eucharistic doctrines of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli which have dominated Protestant theology from the Reformation till recent years were not the fresh formulation of the spiritual experience of the Church at the Eucharist, but an interpretation of the text of Scripture as they understood it. To appreciate, therefore, what a Free Churchman really means and understands by the Communion Service it is more important to consider his doctrine of the Church than that doctrine of the sacraments which he has supposed to be a correct interpretation of Scripture. For our thought of the Communion Service is dominated by our thought of the Church as the fellowship of believers, the company of the redeemed; in our view "the Church planted or gathered is a company or number of Christians or believers which by a willing covenant with their God are under the government of God and Christ and keep His laws in one holy communion";<sup>2</sup> the Church is such "a chosen, redeemed, faithful, free, holy people as are called unto and walk in the faith of Christ Jesus."<sup>3</sup> The Church consists thus of believers only, of those, that is, who have some vital, experimental communion with God through Christ. Their knowledge and their Christian witness are still imperfect,

<sup>1</sup> The Communion Service is generally held at the close of Morning or Evening Service.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Browne, *A Treatise of Reformation without taryng for anie.*

<sup>3</sup> Henry Barrowe, *Briefe Discoverie of the False Church.*

yet they have been brought into the right relation to God through Christ, they are conscious of God's grace, they have been born again into the family of God, of which the local Church is the symbol and expression. The Church is viewed, then, not as a hospital for sick folk who through the sacramental ministries of the Church, through perseverance and the grace of Christ hope in the end to attain to everlasting life, but as the company of those who have committed themselves to God in Christ by faith, who have received the gift of God which is eternal life and who now in peace and joy work out in daily experience their great salvation.

That our Churches to-day are far short of this ideal I know more truly than any can know from without ; yet each Church is in some measure an approximation to this high ideal, and it is in the light of the ideal and of such experience as has actually been ours that we understand the Communion Service.

To the "Catholic," Anglican, Greek and Roman, unless I am much misled, the partaking of the elements is the means *par excellence* whereby the divine, supernatural life (quasi-physically conceived) is infused into the believer and recipient. The bread and the wine is "medicine," to use the ancient phrase ; and the Church exists largely to dispense to her children these "holy mysteries." Thus the Sacrament largely *produces* the divine life in the communicants, and the bread and wine are the *viatica* for the next reach of the soul's pilgrimage.

I do not wish to suggest that these thoughts are entirely absent from the Free Churchman's view of the Sacrament ; but with the Free Churchman the dominant emphasis is upon the view that the Sacrament does not infuse the new life into the believer but *expresses* the life of the individual and the community which has been and is being experienced *already*, the fellowship with Christ, the feeding upon Him by faith, and by expressing it deepens and intensifies this life and experience.

It may be said, if the Sacrament only expresses what exists already, then the Service is otiose and needless. Not quite so. Friendship is possible without the grip of hands ; but who does not know what the grasp of a friend's hand means, outward form though it be? It says often what we cannot say ; it is eloquent when we cannot speak. It is an outward sign, yet more than a mere sign ; it conveys grace. So with the Sacrament.

The Sacrament thus *expresses* our relation, as sinners redeemed and forgiven, to Christ whose blood was shed for us, our fellowship together in Him and our new life in Him which is a feeding upon Him by faith—expresses and by expressing intensifies. The Communion Service is thus essentially a *Eucharist*.

III. As I have said, there is with us no generally accepted theological doctrine of the Eucharist ; and in recent years new elements have come into the discussion, and in the light of these we must restate our view.

Till recent years it has been the common assumption of all parties that at the Last Supper our Lord instituted the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. Critical scholarship, except to those who on other grounds are compelled to hold to the traditional view, has made this assumption extremely uncertain. It is suggested that the words at the Last Supper instituting a new rite in perpetuity are due to Paul's influence, and it is much more certain that the accounts of the early Eucharist, "the breaking of bread," in the New Testament and the early Church manual called "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,"<sup>1</sup> show a minimum of continuity with the Last Supper. It would be out of place here to go into the evidence which is familiar to scholars. But it is obvious that this new element of uncertainty is of enormous importance.

In the light of the evidence which modern scholarship affords, it seems most probable that at the Last Supper Christ instituted no new rite ; the real or

<sup>1</sup> Which must be dated somewhere between A.D. 90 and 150.

normal type of the Eucharist I take to be such gatherings as when in the evenings after the day's work was done, the disciples would gather round Him, and He as Master and Head of the household would, in Jewish fashion, offer thanks for the gifts of food and no doubt for the success of the day's work and for their fellowship together, and then would break to them the bread and pass round the cup. Such gatherings, again, would be the feeding of the five thousand, when the Eucharistic formula is used and the bread and the fish are passed round; or, again, the supper at Emmaus, where they recognised Him (apparently) by His naturally taking the presidency and by the way, the old familiar way, in which He broke to them the bread; or the breakfast by the seaside in the morning light, when He shared with them the bread and fish; or, finally, the "breaking of bread" in the early Christian homes, which I interpret in the light of the prayers quoted in "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles."<sup>1</sup>

In the light of current Jewish practice such forms

<sup>1</sup> This is the relevant passage from "The Teaching." "And concerning the Eucharist, hold Eucharist thus: First, concerning the Cup, 'We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the Holy Vine of David thy child, which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy child; to thee be glory for ever.' And concerning the broken Bread: 'We give thee thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy child. To thee be glory for ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth unto thy kingdom, for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.' But let none eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptized in the Lord's Name. For concerning this also did the Lord say, 'Give not that which is holy to the dogs.' But after you are satisfied with food thus give thanks: 'We give thanks to thee, O Holy Father, for thy Holy Name which thou didst make to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which thou hast made known to us through Jesus thy Child. To thee be glory for ever. Thou, Lord Almighty, didst create all things for thy Name's sake, and didst give food and drink to men for their enjoyment, that they might give thanks to thee, but us hast thou blessed with spiritual food and drink and eternal light through thy Child. Above all we give thanks to thee for that thou art mighty. To thee be glory for ever. Remember, Lord, thy Church to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in thy love, and gather it together in its holiness from the four winds to thy kingdom which thou hast prepared for it. For thine is the power and the glory for ever. Let grace come and let this world pass away. Hosannah to the God of David. If any man be holy, let him come! if any man be not, let him repeat: Maran atha, Amen.' But suffer the prophets to hold Eucharist as they will." [Prof. Lake's translation.]

and thanksgivings at the table at which the head of the house presided were almost inevitable ; no special institution was necessary ; no special significance attached to the elements, which were varied according to circumstances, and normally in the primitive Church there seems to have been no reference to the Last Supper. It seems probable that in the Corinthian Church at their "*Lord's Supper*" there was no reference to the *Last Supper*, and Paul reminds them of the *Last Supper* in order to give them a sense of the dignity and solemnity of their "Lord's Supper." We may well agree with Paul that when Christians meet together for their thanksgiving for Christ over the bread and wine, they *should* remember the Last Supper with its Paschal associations and with Christ's solemn words then, when too (very likely) their Friend, so soon to be taken from them, asked them, however needlessly, not to forget Him when they broke the bread hereafter. But the Last Supper was only one, though a specially solemn one, of a series of Eucharists, and the essence of the rite is the common meal with the giving of thanks.<sup>1</sup>

IV. This is precisely how I interpret the Eucharist to-day.

I stayed once in a Dutch home in Amsterdam. Not all the family came down to breakfast very punctually ; but when the last had arrived, the servants were summoned, the head of the family took the Bible, read a few verses and then offered a few words in prayer and praise. If at that little service in the middle of breakfast the bread had been passed round and each had taken a morsel, it would have been, I imagine, as near a repetition of the early "breaking of bread" as we could well have to-day.

In modern Church life the Eucharist cannot often be held at a common meal, nor should we desire it so ;

<sup>1</sup> This kind of view, together with the evidence for it, is available in Dr. Bartlett's essay on "The Early Eucharist" in *Mansfield College Essays*.



but the idea remains the same. It is essentially a common meal with the giving of thanks. The Church gathers together ; after the reading of Scripture and sometimes a word of exposition or reminder, an Eucharistic prayer is offered ; then the bread is passed round ; then another prayer ; then the wine ; then after the taking of the alms for the poorer brethren in Christ the Service closes with the benediction or doxology. Thanksgiving is here offered (this is not always done) for the common gifts of life, and above all for Jesus Christ and our life in Him, which, as we feel, is suitably shadowed forth and expressed in the act of sitting at His table to eat and drink the bread and wine to which simple elements deeper associations are gathered through His own words at the Last Supper. It is the company of disciples once more gathered at His table, but with all the fuller experience which has come through His death and resurrection and the history of the Church. But for the " validity " of this rite (to use an expression quite alien to us) no Chapel is needed, no specially ordained ministry, no propinquity of wine—the rite is too simple, natural, open-air for these things ; let there be but a few believers, let them but gather solemnly together, let the senior amongst them offer thanks (or if there be a " prophet " among them, let him do it), and let the bread and water be distributed—it is not that the Master was not with them before, it is not that they are not ever feeding upon Him, but it is the hand-grip, as it were, the visible expression, the seal and intensification of the high, mysterious, yet intimate communion of the souls of men together and with the risen Lord which is the Christian life and our great salvation.

XI

PRAYER AND BODILY HEALTH

BY

HAROLD ANSON

## SYNOPSIS

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| There is nothing contradictory between such a science of Christian healing and the alleviation of physical conditions by material remedies; nevertheless the "healing" wrought by Christ is something different from the physician's art, and the Church is called upon to discover and practise the method used by Christ, which is founded on a rational and discoverable basis . . . . . | 358-60 |

## XI

### PRAYER AND BODILY HEALTH

THE impression created by the ministry of Jesus Christ upon those who were nearest to Him undoubtedly was that the dominance of His mind over material conditions was a conspicuous note of His ministry, which marked it off from the work of most of the great teachers of the old covenant. We cannot cut out the accounts of these resplendent victories in the physical sphere without reducing the whole history of our Lord to hopeless confusion and throwing doubt upon the trustworthiness of the record itself. "Miracles"—that is, events happening in the physical sphere outside of, and beyond, our normal experience, are an integral part of the recorded life of Christ. No attempt to make out a coherent account of His life by cutting out such events has any chance of acceptance in modern times. The deletion of these "miraculous" deeds would mean the abandonment of our belief in any historical Jesus whatever. In saying this, we need not deny that some accounts of miraculous occurrences may have been exaggerated, some may have been invented by popular rumour quite naturally, and in all good faith have been handed down, by those who, after being eye-witnesses of one "mighty work," were willing to accept others equally marvellous on insufficient and hearsay evidence. No doubt, as we have been reminded, the account of these occurrences if they had been recorded by trained

modern scientific observers, might have differed materially from that given by honest but uncritical contemporary witnesses. It is possible, again, that some sayings given in parabolic and dramatic form may have been afterwards recorded as actual miraculous events. Let us freely grant the possibility of all this being true, and make full allowance for it. Let us also allow for the fact that it takes something much more like thirty seconds than the thirty years—the period which, more or less, elapsed between the alleged events of the Gospel narrative, and their appearance in their present form—for a tradition to be accepted as genuine in an uncritical and “devout” atmosphere. Yet after making all these deductions from the value of the evidence, we are faced with the fact that the strong impression created upon every eye-witness, so far as we know, of the ministry of Christ, was that supranormal events were a constant and habitual accompaniment of His activities upon earth.

It appears also that He Himself laid considerable weight upon the importance of these happenings. They were signs of His authority, they were marks of the Kingdom that He came to establish. John the Baptist was referred to them (“the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the lame walk”) as proof that Jesus was the inaugurator of the promised Kingdom.

It is important also to observe that Jesus did not apparently regard these mighty works as due to some private and peculiar possession by Himself of occult powers which were not at least potentially exercisable by mankind in general. It is probable that he selected from among several other Messianic titles that of “The Man”<sup>1</sup> (for this is the best translation of the phrase which we know as “Son of Man”) in order that it might be clear that He claimed to act not in virtue of powers which mankind as a whole could by no means

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of the significance of this title see Charles's *Book of Enoch*, and Kirsopp Lake's *Stewardship of Faith*.

share, but in virtue of powers which Man may and should possess and exercise. He came, in a word, to show us, not what God could do and Man could not do, but what Man could do, and is intended to do, when he lives the life that God designed for him and exercises those powers which God places at his disposal. Thus we notice that so far from blaming Peter for trying to walk upon the water, He blames him for his slowness in not possessing faith sufficient to enable him to do so. He by no means blames the disciples for their unsuccessful attempt to cast out devils, He deplores their lack of faith as the sole cause of their mortifying failure.

He attributes His own powers, and the authority which His teaching commands, over and over again, according to the Johannine narrative, to the sole fact that He acts entirely in subordination to the Father's will ; the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do ; He acts as the Son, and on that fact alone His claim is based. But this sonship is the characteristic attitude of the true and normal man as God designed him to be. We are all intended to be "in the Son" or "to be sons," so that all men acting as He acted, and living on the principles by which He worked, doing only those works which the Father wrought in them, would be endued with similar and even greater powers. "Greater works than these shall ye do."

This belief—that the command over material conditions was an essential part of the endowment of the human race, in so far as it was restored and redeemed to its divine ideal by the work of Christ—was essentially the belief of the Church in its earliest days. The early Christian writers constantly claimed that belief in Christ and fellowship in the Christian community conferred power over devils, over sickness, and over material forces.<sup>1</sup> It is very significant, as a survival of this

<sup>1</sup> It would be impossible within the compass of an essay to give the history of Christian healing. For a full discussion of the history of this belief see Harnack's *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity* and Dearmer's *Body and Soul*.

almost forgotten belief, that, even to the present day, the performance of "miracles" is regarded as one of the chief claims to canonisation by the Roman Church.

It is perhaps almost inevitable, but it is none the less a very grievous misfortune, that the multiplication of bogus shrines and the pernicious traffic connected with them should in the later Middle Ages have brought the whole principle of spiritual healing into contempt. The Reformed Churches abandoned the belief in healing as a natural and normal exercise of Christian faith, along with many other healthy beliefs, through a laudable and wholly justifiable fear of the trickery and deception which seemed to them almost inseparable from the belief. The belief lingered on, indeed, obscurely and with very dubious results.<sup>1</sup> Both the belief and the practice continued in the "unreformed" portions of the Church, but, so far as it continued, it was not in any way based upon a scientific belief in the innate tendency of man's physical constitution to respond to the stimulus of spiritual and mental health, and it degenerated into a base and often quite irrational belief in the value of certain very doubtfully genuine relics, and the virtue of certain saints to cure particular diseases by resort to their shrines. Such typical instances are the beliefs prevalent among Roman Catholics that St. Anthony of Padua will discover lost goods, and that Our Lady of Lourdes or St. Winifred of Holywell will cure illnesses which would probably not be cured by other saints or at other shrines.

While the Church continued to bear this very feeble and dubious witness to the view which appears to underlie the actions of Christ—the truth that the physical universe is nothing else than a manifestation of Mind, and that its form will tend to vary as the mind of man ascends or deteriorates—Natural Science was becoming, after the Renaissance, more and more frankly materialistic.

<sup>1</sup> See Dearmer, *Body and Soul*, for the history of Touching for the King's Evil,

It is a mistake, indeed, to suppose that while Religion was only slowly becoming less superstitious, Medical Science was becoming more enlightened and rational by leaps and bounds. Culpepper's *Herbal*, which represented the opinion of a popular physician of the sixteenth century, and was reprinted and used well on into the nineteenth century, bases the belief of physical cure entirely upon Astrology, while the great Paracelsus believed that it was wise to inspect the horoscope of your physician before you trusted to one who might, in spite of his skill, have been born under a hostile star. The prescriptions recommended by physicians even within our own memory are just as irrational and probably less efficacious than the visit to Lourdes or Holywell recommended by the contemporary spiritual practitioner. The one treatment was based upon the power of herbs and minerals to alter conditions which we now know to be largely due to mental causes, the other upon the belief that departed saints could affect symptoms which were partly mental and partly physical: the former treatment was no more rational than the latter and is likely to become quite as rapidly antiquated and disused. The modern "sixpenny" doctor, rapidly handing out bottles of medicine to a queue of patients, must often have to do so with very much the same feelings as those which animate the Roman Catholic priest who gives a medal or a scapulary to the simple peasant. There are a certain number of drugs, far fewer than is popularly supposed, that are without doubt of great use in our present state of knowledge, and there is, no doubt, a background of more or less intelligent and scientific experiment behind the list of prescriptions somewhat mechanically dispensed by the doctor; but in the absence of opportunity of careful diagnosis, it is probable that the doctor, like the priest, is mainly working by the power of suggestion. Both can doubtless point to the general satisfaction given to the recipients and



to a decent percentage of successes as some justification of their empirical treatment.<sup>1</sup>

It was only natural that as scientists came to rely, more and more frankly, on purely material means for the recovery of health, they, and with them philosophers and historians influenced by their methods, should more and more feel bound to discount the record of the Gospel miracles. These have attempted to do so at various periods by suggesting (1) that the eye-witnesses were innocent, but wholly incapable and unreliable, witnesses; (2) that the records had been "faked" in the interests of priests and Churches; (3) that the spiritual teaching rested upon a foundation of evidence different from, and superior to, that upon which the evidence for miracles was founded, and that the rational course was to accept the teaching as genuine while rejecting the works. All of these attacks have been rebutted and are now generally being abandoned.

The attack upon the Gospel miracles from the side of medical science now takes a different form. It is suggested that many, at least, of the recorded miracles are perfectly genuine and are really cases well known in modern times to medical science. They are instances of the well-known cure of diseases which are really hysterical but which have simulated organic diseases which could not have been cured. The definition indeed of hysteria among authorities of this school appears to be that it is a disease of any kind which proves capable of being cured by faith, so that, *ipso facto*, a disease cured by faith becomes at once a case of hysteria. Diseases, on the other hand, which cannot be

<sup>1</sup> "A very curious phenomenon of medical mentality is the fact that physicians hardly ever find out under what circumstances a certain symptom appeared. It would seem as though they regarded the moral and emotional life on one hand as separated by an absolute barrier from the physical life on the other hand. . . . When we try to find out whether any of our patients have had any questions asked them concerning their moral condition as related to their physical condition, not merely do the majority but every single one of them give us a negative reply.—There was never any moral enquiry made, even by those who most carefully and conscientiously made a thorough physical examination."—*The Psychoneuroses and their Treatment by Psychotherapy*, by Dejerine and Gauckler, p. 206.

cured by faith are alone genuine organic diseases, and the cure of these is denied.

So it follows that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get any medical evidence of the cure of those diseases which are generally classed as "organic," because whenever such cases occur, the answer will always be given that the diagnosis may have quite possibly been mistaken and the disease must, seeing that it was cured by mental or spiritual processes, have been purely hysterical.<sup>1</sup>

Medical men in this country have been exceedingly backward in admitting the possibility of any curative action of the mind upon physical health. While in Germany, and on the Continent generally, the study of psychology in its relation to disease has been pursued for many years past, in this country comparatively little progress has been made as yet, and the study itself has been looked upon with grave suspicion and dislike by the medical faculty in general.

While Freud has been teaching in Germany the immense significance of mental states, both conscious and subconscious, in the treatment of disease,<sup>2</sup> in France the medical profession is learning to attack all diseases, both those often called "organic" and those called "functional" (the division is neither scientific nor complete) by the practice (along with material treatment) of psychotherapy. "Mon expérience m'a appris qu'il n'y avait pas d'affection, si purement 'organique' et matérielle qu'on la supposât, où l'application délibérée et suivie des diverses méthodes psychothérapiques ne fût à même de produire des résultats d'une utilité très réelle."<sup>3</sup>

In England, so much more conservative in these

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Edwin Ash's *Faith and Suggestion*. In the case examined a girl was stated by her medical attendant, "a practitioner of many years' experience and high qualifications," to be suffering, on definite evidence, from tuberculosis in an advanced stage. She was, almost instantaneously, completely and definitely cured by "faith" or "suggestion."

<sup>2</sup> For a brief and exceedingly clear summary of Freud's theories, see McDougall's *Psychology*, ch. vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Traité pratique de Psychothérapie*, by Dr. Charles Burlureaux.

matters, the break-up of the confidence in purely materialistic methods of healing has already well begun, though even now the great majority of the medical profession in this country only admit the efficacy of mental therapeutics grudgingly and with the proviso that it can be used only in a limited class of diseases. The future, however, from the side of scientific research is full of hope. Many of the most brilliant of our younger men are experimenting along these lines, and are coming more and more to appreciate the need for a spiritual as well as a purely intellectual reconstruction in the psychological treatment of disease.<sup>1</sup>

While Natural Science has been groping its way painfully and hesitatingly from the paths of materialism back to belief in the reality of a spiritual and mental world, the Church, which might have been expected to be in the forefront of the search for some law and rationale of the action of the Spirit over the physical constitution of man, has lagged strangely behind, clinging tightly to the skirts of orthodox medical opinion.<sup>2</sup> The chief cause of this has been no doubt partly due to the dismal frauds and failures which often beset any new *démarche* in science, but it has also been due to a strange and firmly fixed belief in the value, and divine origin of, disease. Disease has been held to be a divine visitation, sometimes sent as a special mark of God's favour, sometimes as a necessary chastisement for some national or individual sin wholly unconnected with the actual origin of the disease. So long as this view is held, there can be no real earnestness put into the fight to rid mankind of the curse of illness. This belief might be supposed to be difficult to hold along with a belief

<sup>1</sup> See McDougall, *Psychology*, p. 202; Edwin Ash, *Mental Self Help*, p. 103; Bernard Hart, *The Psychology of Insanity, Abnormal Psychology and Psychotherapeutics*, by Morton Prince and others; G. Elliot Smith, *Shock and the Soldier*.

<sup>2</sup> See *Life of Francis Paget*, p. 246:—"The matter for anxiety now is 'Mental Therapeutics,' about that matter I am very anxious:—for I believe that in the sense in which most talked of it is seldom untouched by, or far off from, superstition and quackery; and I am very much frightened when those who are listened to suggest that the Church shall take it up. I do earnestly hope that the Church won't."

in the miraculous cures of the Gospel. But the difficulty was surmounted by regarding the miracles worked by Christ as portents intended to proclaim and support His divine origin, and not intended to be repeated or retained by the Church at all, much less as being a revelation of the original constitution of human nature. It was therefore held that miracles were not intended to continue and in fact did cease after those few recorded in the sacred Canon, all subsequently reported miracles being due to the superstitious and uncritical credulity of the dark ages. The Church therefore paid a willing and sincere homage to the materialistic science of medicine, like King Asa of old, who in his disease sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians, and slept with his fathers. The Church is in some little danger of doing likewise.

Good and learned Bishops like Dr. Paget did not foresee that "Mental Therapeutics" would so soon be taught by orthodox practitioners in Harley Street, nor did he have in mind the activities of the "sixpenny" doctor, or notice how often the materialistic treatment by drugs is sometimes very near to "superstition and quackery." Though the "sixpenny" doctor has disappeared with the passing of the Insurance Act, it is to be feared that "panel" practice in certain cases still is not free from some "superstition and quackery." The same criticism may of course be truly passed upon much "religious" practice. The priest, indeed, is at least as prone to empirical methods as the doctor, and he has very much less excuse; for it may be urged that the physician has not generally been taught the science of psychology as part of his special training, whereas the priest has continually in front of him the teaching and practice of Christ in regarding disease as a phenomenon of the spiritual and mental life.<sup>1</sup>

It is true indeed that the Church has never officially

<sup>1</sup> The Anglican divines were inclined to accept the miracles as well as the doctrines of the first six centuries until they came under the influence of the "Enlightenment" of the eighteenth century.

abandoned belief in spiritual healing. Bishops are solemnly commissioned to heal the sick, but no Christian so far as we are aware ever now expects to be healed by a Bishop ; it is true also of course that all Christians have expressed a belief in prayer for the sick, and many have genuinely hoped to find relief from sickness by the power of prayer. But their belief in prayer has been incomparably less potent than their belief in diet and drugs. Nine Christians out of ten, in a serious illness, would without doubt have rather gone without the prayer than without the "bottle of medicine," and would hope infinitely more from the ministrations of the physician than from the prayers of the priest.

While the Church had thus become almost as materialistic as the world outside in its attitude to disease, there arose in New England a movement, some seventy years ago, to reassert upon a scientific basis the primitive Christian belief in the cure of disease by spiritual process. Phineas Quimby (1802-1866), a simple and sincere enquirer after truth, after practising and abandoning the methods of mesmerism, came by experiment to have a firm belief that disease was due to an erroneous belief in the mind of the patient, which inhibited the free course of vitality in the body. By removing the wrong belief, and substituting the true belief, he cured his patients. "I deny disease as a truth, but I admit it as a deception, started like all other stories without any foundation, and handed down from generation to generation, till the people believe it, and it has become part of their lives. So they live a lie, and their senses are in it."<sup>1</sup> Quimby had very great success in his campaign of "un-thinking" disease. More and more he became convinced that physical manifestations of disease had their root in a diseased consciousness (not always "a conscious consciousness"), and that the curing of the consciousness would cure the disease. Quimby is said to have been a diligent student

<sup>1</sup> See *Health and the Inner Life*, by Horatio Dresser.

of the Bible and to have been convinced that this theory supplied a rationale of the miraculous healings of the New Testament. His teaching seems to have been crude, and his hostility to medicine somewhat violent, but he is a true precursor of more scientific methods.

Among Quimby's patients was one Mrs. Patteson, who was cured by him in 1862. This lady, afterwards known as Mrs. Eddy, became the foundress of "Christian Science." She took in hand, with a truly extraordinary success, the work of popularising Quimby's theories and practice. It is greatly to be regretted that Mrs. Eddy not only made no public acknowledgment of her debt, but went out of her way to claim the discovery for herself and to belittle Quimby.<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Eddy's text-book, *Science and Health*, has had an extraordinary vogue both in America and in this country. It is difficult for most people to overcome their aversion from the singular lack of style or logic which characterises this book, which among Christian Scientists is regarded as only second to the Bible in authority; yet it cannot be denied that it has been the means of giving bodily and spiritual wholeness to many whom no other form of religion has touched. No words of gratitude are too great to express the debt which numbers of good and devout people feel towards this book and its authoress. All which is of permanent value in it can be found in previous writings, and that which is added will seem to most people to be for the most part unfortunately conceived and cumbrously expressed; yet round it the enthusiastic faith and devotion of all Christian Scientists are centred.

It would be impossible to sum up within the compass of an essay the faith of Christian Scientists, but we may say briefly that their belief is founded upon the affirmations that God is wholly good and has not even knowledge or experience of evil, disease or death :

<sup>1</sup> Christian Scientists vehemently deny that Mrs. Eddy was indebted to the teachings of Mr. Quimby.

that true Man is an image or reflection of God : that there is but one Mind in the universe, which is God's Mind : that belief in plurality of minds and personalities, as also in mortality and in matter, flesh, sin, disease and death, is all due to the delusion known as "mortal mind,"<sup>1</sup> which has no real existence in the Divine Scheme : that man, conceived as a mortal and material being, living in flesh, born, growing, sinning, marrying, eating and drinking, and subject to disease and death, is a delusion born of "mortal mind." Man can only be cured of disease by being cured of his belief in "materiality." This is what Jesus came to do. He is the "Way Shewer," and He passed through the experience of encountering and overcoming "materiality." In proportion as we cease to think disease and sin, and learn only to live in God and reflect His mind, we shall cease to reflect "materiality," and shall first become free from disease and erroneous thought, and finally free from material expression altogether. To this belief, which contains elements that are important and true, is added in practice a belief in the practical infallibility of the text-book and of the authoress, without which belief no one can be a member of the Church ; though it is only fair to say that probably this statement would not be accepted without demur by authorised exponents of "Science." No one can be a member of the Church without giving up membership in any other religious body. "Christian Science" has achieved enormous success, and in spite of very obvious intellectual crudities and practical limitations, and many sad mistakes arising from contempt for medical science, has done more than any other society, orthodox or otherwise, to make practical healing a normal part of religion.

Other quasi-ecclesiastical societies of the same kind have arisen—"Divine Science," "Higher Thought,"

<sup>1</sup> "Mortal mind" seems to be another expression for St. Paul's "mind of the flesh."

Dr. Mills's movement, and others, all based more or less upon an Emersonian philosophy and owing their parentage ultimately to the teaching of these New England "health" prophets. If they cast out devils in Christ's Name, let us beware lest we pour scorn upon them. We have much to learn, and we have great need to learn it.

Within the Anglican Church there is a tendency for the movement towards faith-healing to divide itself into three departments.

(1) There are some who regard the need for the healing movement of modern times as due to the loss of the Sacrament of Unction. They are interested in it mainly in so far as it leads to such a revival, and regard "Spiritual Healing" as being normally to be expected only through the rites of Unction and the Laying on of Hands. They would of course lay all possible stress upon the appropriate spiritual dispositions in the patient, but would tend to minimise the need of any intellectual change on the part of the patient. They would deplore the tendency in the Roman Catholic Church to use Unction mainly as a preparation for death, and would desire that it should for the future be used with the expectation that it would be a means of physical cure. This school of thought would regard healing as a strictly Sacerdotal Function.

(2) There are others again who would not desire to restrict the use of healing to the Clerical Order nor would they restrict it within the bounds of sacramental ordinances. They would tend to regard it as a personal and peculiar gift, which like clairvoyance, water-finding or mesmerism is given to some and not to others, and operates by a quasi-magnetic personal touch. Thus we find that Lord Tennyson believed that he possessed a mesmeric power of healing disease.<sup>1</sup> Lord Sandwich has written an account<sup>2</sup> of his powers and his experi-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Tennyson*, p. 484.

<sup>2</sup> *My Experiences in Spiritual Healing*, by the Earl of Sandwich.



ences in that direction, and in his book he mentions other "healers" as having the same power as himself. This power is regarded, as we have said, as a personal endowment, possessed by some and not by others; to be used doubtless with all religious humility and care, but depending upon the possession of a peculiar personal endowment, and having no necessary connection with any intellectual doctrine.<sup>1</sup> Such persons would be commonly spoken of as "healers."

(3) There is a third school of thought with whose principles and methods I propose to deal at greater length, because they have, in my own opinion, a closer relation both to philosophy and spiritual principles than either of the two others which we have noted. These last, while not disputing the possession of these personal gifts, nor their value within certain limits, and admitting that outward expressions of healing, such as Unction or Laying on of Hands, may have a real value as symbolic acts and that such ministries should be found naturally among the clergy, lay stress upon the fact that our Lord emphasised the need of faith in the recipient for the carrying out of His mighty works. In so far as there is any power of mental action in the recipient, there must be a right faith in God and in man. This will be the ultimate cause of healing, whatever process may be used. All passions and lusts, all distrust of God, all superstitious fears, all worldliness and materialism are regarded as inhibitions which must be removed before healing can take place, since "healing" in its deepest sense is a spiritual and mental correspondence with natural law, and not a "magical" act by which pain can be miraculously removed.

Moreover, a mere healing of bodily symptoms, produced by a ceremony or by a magnetic touch (and such healings are without doubt recorded), would not

<sup>1</sup> Many "healers" would assert most emphatically that their charismatic gift was derived from Christ and that they were merely instruments by means of which Christ continued in the Church His healing ministry.

prevent the same spiritual, moral or mental delusions which originally produced the disease from reproducing it again after the healing was completed. The healing must reach to the deepest springs of life, if it is to be permanent and of capital value. The whole relation of the patient to God and man must be revolutionised if necessary and put upon a firm basis of truth before the cure can be regarded as a true and a Christian one. A natural "magnetic" gift, such as Tennyson believed himself to possess, may cure a pain or even a disease, but it is not a "spiritual" cure.<sup>1</sup> It has no higher spiritual element in it than the work of the physician, and is only differentiated from the process carried out by the medical practitioner in that the latter may use a physical drug whereas the "healer" uses a psychical drug, the action of which is not yet analysed or explained. The practice of healing by spiritual and mental re-education carries with it no necessary antipathy to the use of material means of cure where these are found to be necessary. A cup of tea or even a homely bun may cure a headache more simply than any spiritual exercises, and the removal of a decayed tooth may be obviously more urgently required than any mental readjustment.

There are many cases with which a teacher of spiritual healing will come into contact where the mind of the patient is so simple, so sincere, and so free from opposing inhibitions that the very simplest and most direct spiritual treatment will have an effect upon physical symptoms which will seem little short of miraculous. This is sometimes the case with little children, who are peculiarly open to the power of suggestion. It is true also of many people whose piety is simple and sincere, who have often a directness of outlook which makes them open in a peculiar degree to suggestions both of good and evil. These

<sup>1</sup> Of course it is true, in a very real sense, that all healing of the body (and indeed the normal functioning of natural processes) is spiritual. It is not intended to deny this fact.

childlike souls will pass sometimes with astonishing rapidity from a consciousness of pain and disease to a state of entire healthfulness.<sup>1</sup>

In dealing, however, with other cases where the mentality of the patient is more complex, the teacher will find that there is need of a process of pulling down as well as a process of building up; there is a place for negation as well as for affirmation; there is need for the Water of cleansing as well as for the Spirit of power, before the patient can see the Kingdom of God. This work of detecting and removing inhibitions is sometimes a very tedious and difficult process, and one which cannot be successfully undertaken without some little experience. Inhibitions are not always in the conscious mind but perhaps more often in the subconscious; they do not always manifest themselves directly but in the most unlikely and tortuous ways.

After following up many false clues, the teacher will suddenly detect the false thought masquerading in an altogether unlooked-for shape.<sup>2</sup> The mental lesion may lie far back in infancy, and be totally unknown and unsuspected by the conscious mind; it may hide itself under the mask of extreme asceticism or religious devotion, or romantic love, or patient resignation to prolonged illness, or delight in intense suffering. A case is quoted by Jung of a man who showed an extreme aversion to the sound of the church bells of a certain Swiss village. It was finally discovered that he had been worsted in a poetical competition by the pastor of the church, and that this jealousy, unknown and forgotten by him, was getting its vent in this way. Many clergymen will tell us of cases of extreme and fanatical devotion to religious ordinances without any corre-

<sup>1</sup> See the case of Dorothy Kerin in Dr. Ash's *Faith and Suggestion*, and Dorothy Kerin's own account of her healing, *The Living Touch*. The case is a remarkable instance of the irresistible working of Divine Love and Power upon a soul which offers no inhibitions.

<sup>2</sup> See the account of Jung's researches on this matter in the chapter on "Complexes" in Hart's *Psychology of Insanity*.

sponding advance in moral life, which is evidently not in reality an expression of religion at all, but is due to the repression in past life of natural instincts, which have never been faced, but merely forced down into the subconsciousness and are reduced to this symbolic form of manifestation.

The teacher who is striving to build up a spiritual faith will be wise if he does not disdain the experience and assistance of psychologists, and of the modern school of medical practitioners, in this difficult and sometimes tedious process. He will have much to learn, and will be wise if he is not too proud to learn it. Yet he must never forget that as a teacher of spiritual healing he is seeking for a reconstitution of the soul more profound than that which the purely psychical healer is seeking. His desire is not merely to see a man whole in body and in mind, not merely to give him a new *weltanschauung*, but to bring him into harmony with God in such sort that perfect Love and Peace may abide in him and give no place to the "devils" who are ready to seize hold of the empty room. He must remember, as Baron F. von Hügel reminded George Tyrrell,<sup>1</sup> "the continuously greater depth and range of Religion as against Science, and the importance of not whittling down the former simply to the level of the latter." Purely spiritual healing may be a very complete and very fundamental process even when it is done in a few seconds by an unlearned saint who knows nothing of mental science at all; but psychic or mental healing, however elaborate in its practical application, and however scientifically conceived, can never be a complete process unless it brings the soul into contact and communion with God, and thus produces spiritual health.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of George Tyrrell*, vol. ii. p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> It is very important that the influencing of one finite mind by another, whether by hypnosis or by any other form of suggestion, should be distinguished from the process whereby it is sought to bring the spirit of the sufferer into contact with the Spirit of God, so that he may be set free from all lower suggestions. This difference is discussed in Essay VII. 215-217.

There will then always be a real place for a type of spiritual healing which is very simple and perhaps very illogical and very uncritical, but there will be, we may believe, an ever-growing sphere for that type of spiritual healing which can at least in part explain itself in terms of mental science, and which takes as its sphere the reconstitution of the mind by the understanding of the laws of spiritual and mental life.

It will no doubt be asked by some who have read thus far, whether this type of healing which aims at the very inmost spirit of man as the true source of spiritual health is necessarily at variance with the old-fashioned materialistic treatment of disease by the "bottle of medicine" or the surgeon's knife.

The reply surely is that, even if the one is destined ultimately to supersede the other, yet for the present they must very often of necessity co-exist. When we understand thoroughly, and have faith to practise boldly and consistently, the science of Christian healing, there will be no need for healing by pills and potions, but meanwhile we have every reason to be grateful for the work of the physician and the surgeon. The priest who is trying to make a man good will constantly see the need, concomitantly with the spiritual process, of putting him into a new physical environment. The boy who steals may need to learn handicrafts, the drunken or dissolute woman may need more food and better clothing, the spiritual and material help go on together: so in the healing of bodily ailments, the spiritual and physical elements of cure are in no way of necessity antagonistic, though in many actual cases no doubt the two treatments are, through human infirmity, carried on with some considerable friction between the operators, and with regrettable loss to the patient. It is conceivable that even in this present dispensation Spiritual Understanding will take the place of drugs just as naturally as Love will take the place of sub-

marines and high explosives in the relations of nations, and spiritual discipline will take the place of the cane in education. Who that believes in Christ's teaching as the demonstration in practice of a real and fundamental spiritual science can doubt that this should be so? Love and Faith must be demonstrated ultimately to be the cure for the horrible evils of crime, disease and war. Meanwhile there is no reason to be ungrateful for those partial remedies which material science offers, and which are the only ones in which the majority of mankind at present believes, or indeed which it is capable of using.

A powerful Navy does appear to most men to be the best guarantee at present available for the suppression of injustice; vaccination does at present seem to be the best remedy we have against the attacks of smallpox; the cane is still believed in by most schoolmasters as a powerful aid to more spiritual succours in the maintenance of discipline. Until the new way opens out clearly to us, we are not necessarily to abandon the old one. Yet we cannot deny that the new way is the one along which ultimately mankind is destined to travel, and there is an abundant reward for those who begin to survey, and perhaps with painful footsteps to tread, the path which will ultimately be the broad and frequented road for all mankind.<sup>1</sup>

It may be well at this point to consider, with some necessary brevity and incompleteness, the relation of the problem of suffering to this movement for spiritual healing. We are so accustomed, for the most part, by our bringing up, to regard suffering as the gift of God that we cannot easily give up the idea of its essential goodness.

We have known good people who have been great sufferers. We have perhaps ourselves suffered much, and seem to have grown in grace owing to our suffer-

<sup>1</sup> It may be wise to remind ourselves that the disappearance of the doctor and his surgery, in the New Jerusalem, will be quickly followed by the disappearance of the priest and the temple.

ing, and, concluding that an experience, which brings apparently so much good, must emanate from God, nothing seems such hard doctrine to understand as that which takes away from us the thought that God "sends" pain and gives diseases for our good and to chastise us for our sins.

Yet we must consider, in the first place, that suffering does not for the most part come upon those who sin, but upon those who are associated innocently with the sinner. The sufferings caused by drunkenness, for instance, or the sufferings caused by a great war, come not chiefly upon those who drink to excess, and not upon those who cause the war, but upon others, the family of the drunkard or (in the case of war) upon those people who, often from the highest and most honourable motives, are drawn into it.

And, again, we must not imagine that when the suffering does, as it sometimes does, fall upon the person that has sinned, that it necessarily, or even generally, turns them to think of better things. Suffering does not by any means always soften the hearts of the sufferers. Probably in the majority of cases it hardens them. Criminals who come out of prison do not, as a general rule, come out better men and women than they went in ; and those whose health is ruined by vice are, oftener than not, worse people than they were before disease wrought its work upon them.

These are in themselves two great arguments against ascribing all suffering to God's appointment : that it so comparatively seldom falls upon those who deserve it, and that when it does fall upon those who—as we say—deserve it, it so very frequently fails to do them any good.

We can, however, as a matter of fact, almost always trace suffering back to the results of evil-doing. This does not mean that we can by any means always assign the suffering to the sin or wrongdoing of the person who suffers. This is very far from being the case, and

we are very specially warned by our Lord against the attempt to do so. But we can so very generally trace back suffering to the direct source of sin committed in the society of which the sufferer forms a part that we are justified in believing that if we knew all the circumstances which surround any case of suffering, we should always be able to point to the sin which caused it. A baby, for instance, dies almost as soon as it is born in some slum of a great town. It certainly, as far as we can see, is not the baby's fault,<sup>1</sup> it may very probably not be the mother's fault, it may very likely be the fault of the people who own the slum, or of the Town Council who continue to allow the slum to exist, or the sin of people like ourselves, who take no real trouble to remove the conditions which cause deaths which obviously would not happen if God's known will were being carried out.

Or, to take another case, some splendid young fellow is shot down in the war. He went out perhaps with no desire at all except to serve his country, with no liking for war, no desire to kill or maim any one, and with no belief in it. His character and his motives are perhaps as pure as any good man's motives can be. Yet he is just as likely to be wounded or killed as any man of bad character, and much more likely to be killed than are the people who actually caused the war. Since, then, in these cases the people who suffer may be entirely innocent, it would seem plain that it is the power of Evil and not the power of Good which brings the suffering.

If sin were to cease to-day, suffering would also cease. In heaven we are given to understand there is no suffering, because God's will is being perfectly carried out. It is therefore wrong and dishonouring to God to say that it is His will that there should be suffering in the world. We could only say this truly,

<sup>1</sup> Theosophists would probably say that the personality incarnated in the baby suffered for its sins done in a former incarnation.



if we also went on to say that it is also His will that there should be sin, for without sin there could not be suffering. If we say that God desires sin, then, and only then, can we say that He desires suffering. It is true indeed to say that God *permits* suffering and wills that it should continue so long as sin continues, but there is a very real difference between that which God desires and that which He unwillingly permits.

Is there then no value in suffering? Are not we trying to do away with the whole teaching of the Cross, which is the chief glory and centre of the Christian Faith?

By no means. We do admit that there is a real value in suffering, for it is the sign which warns us of the presence of sin. It is a very good thing that a door squeaks when it needs oiling; it is a good thing that a plant droops when it needs watering, but we do not say, "This door was made by a first-class joiner, and therefore if it squeaks it must have been intended to squeak, and it would be rash for us to interfere with it"; or, "This plant was created by God, and if He allows it to droop it must be His will, and we must let it go on drooping." On the contrary, the fact that the door squeaks, or the plant droops, is a sign to us that they are not living the life which their maker intended them to live, and it is for us to change the conditions.

We believe, therefore, that God is working for the removal, and not for the causing, of suffering, and we must work with Him in this direction.

We are bound, however, to remember that there are many cases where, so far as we can see, the actual choice which lies before us is either that of avoiding suffering by doing what is selfish, and therefore sinful, or of doing something which is noble and incurring suffering. The soldier who resolves to creep out into the most dangerous zone of the battle to drag back a wounded and suffering comrade knows that in all probability God calls him to do something which may render him a cripple for life

and give him terrible suffering. It is obviously his duty to risk the suffering and do the right and noble thing. He does it, and is perhaps horribly wounded. What are we to say then?

Our answer is, that the whole circumstances of the battlefield are due to the breach of God's law, and are plainly contrary to His will for men. Yet God may be, and very often is, very closely with a good man who finds himself taking part in these conditions, which are still the result of sin.

Because the conditions are sinful, suffering is often possible, and sometimes inevitable. Yet where the man who is in the midst of evil conditions is himself living in communion with God and is keeping His laws, God is at work healing and restoring the wounds which yet are caused by sin.

We all have to take our share in the suffering caused by racial and corporate sin. It is good for us that this is so, for only thus do we realise our solidarity with the race, and though this suffering is often very unnecessarily exaggerated by our own auto-suggestions, it is a very real fact in life.

So there are in the world to-day many people who are suffering, and whose suffering is due; so far as we can see, to their having gone from the noblest motives into the very thick of sin. God is then at work with them and in them, either removing the results of sin, or else by giving to the one who suffers so great a joy and consolation, that the suffering is merged in the triumph of spiritual victory; and, the world being, as it is, a corrupt world, it is generally only in an atmosphere of suffering, and in a conflict with sin which lays us open to suffering, that we can work out our salvation. It is equally true of us corrupted men that it is only through sinning, and by overcoming sin, that we do, in actual experience, attain to holiness. Yet neither sin nor suffering is the purpose of God for the world.

Let us apply this teaching to the doctrine of the

Cross. It was the hope and deliberate intention of our Lord that the Jews should receive His message and accept Him as their King. He did not intend, nor can we believe that God intended, that they should reject His message and crucify Him; otherwise we must charge God with being the author of their sin, for Christ could not have been crucified apart from sin. We must believe that a far greater blessing would have accrued to the world by the Jews accepting Him than by their rejection of Him. It was their sin, their great sin, in rejecting Him, which caused the Crucifixion; it was not God's appointment. Had then God no part in the Crucifixion? Yes. It was God's part to give our Lord the courage and the vision which carried Him through that supreme trial and caused Death to be swallowed up in victory.

In the Crucifixion we see the exact measure of the power of Sin over Goodness; in the Resurrection we see the part which God plays in removing the effects of sin.

There are, no doubt, many who feel that sin, whether their own or that of others, has inflicted upon them a wound which, humanly speaking, cannot in this world be healed. In some cases, as, for instance, in the loss of a limb, the loss cannot, so far as our present degree of knowledge carries us, be made good at all in this world. Yet even in such a case God does not cease to fight steadily against suffering and mutilation. If our corporate faith were greater, He might conceivably show us a way to instant restoration. But even though we cannot yet see thus far, God, as it were, builds for us a "house of defence" round about us. He lessens the evils of a mutilated life; He compensates for it by giving us a great activity of spirit in other directions; He even may so order it that our patient and constant fight against the evils wrought by sin may win for us triumphs which seemed to be outside our competence before; and where the wound caused by evil is due to

our own personal sin, the removal of the sin may more than compensate us in those cases where our ignorance of God's laws makes a perfect physical restoration, under present circumstances, unobtainable, and the fight against the results of corporate sin may awaken in us a sense of social solidarity and a strong desire for social betterment which we could not otherwise, so far as we can see, have known.

A charge is often made against those who are interested in this movement that by laying so much stress upon bodily health we tend to draw away attention from the higher duties of spiritual conversion. We believe that the practice of spiritual healing is not open to that charge. The physician indeed is mainly concerned with the task of relieving the bodily ailment and may allow the deeper spiritual and mental symptoms to go untouched; but the spiritual healer must withdraw the patient's interest from the bodily symptoms and fix it upon the spiritual understanding of his case. No true spiritual teacher could stop short of the healing of the spirit, or could hope to say "Take up thy bed and walk" until he had been able to say in some very real and potent sense, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The patient who came to be cured of that which seemed to be a purely physical ailment would need to be treated, either wholly, or concurrently with the material cure, by a cleansing and re-education of the spiritual and mental outlook. No form of teaching could really be less justly accused of ministering to an excessive deference to mere physical fitness than that which rescued bodily well-being from the domain of purely material laws, and proclaimed it to be rooted and grounded in a true relationship to God and man.

Nor is it fair to say that such a teaching substitutes mental suggestion for Christian prayer, and that "Spiritual Healing" is merely another form of mental suggestion. It is true that healing may take place, and very often does take place, as the result of almost any

strong suggestion, with little regard to the truth or falsity of the suggestion made. Tell a "devout" patient that she is kissing the robe worn by Christ, or tell the free-thinking patient hypnotised in the clinic that he has never been, and never can be, ill, or tell the palsied man that a lion is about to spring upon him and his only safety lies in flight, and the result of all these untrue suggestions may often be very marvellous indeed. Marvellous, yes, in the purely physical sphere, but not so in the spiritual sphere where the original source of disease and of healing really lies. There we need a suggestion which is true and which corresponds with the real nature of things. We have somehow to be able to diagnose the spiritual lesion of the soul, to heal it, and to convey to the wounded soul the Divine suggestion or Thought which was from all eternity the true basis of that patient's life. Thus only, by causing the sick soul to grasp and hold that true Nature of his—which indeed is Christ—can healing in its deepest sense be brought about. If this be called suggestion, then let us not quarrel about the word. But is it not something more akin to Prayer—Prayer in that "scientific" sense alluded to in another essay—the evocation of Divine Power according to an Eternal Law, to show itself in bringing the finite and needy soul into correspondence with the Law of Love which will be its healing?

The healing of Christ did indeed manifest no elaborate process of psychology. Like a great work of art it seems to come down from heaven—it is inevitable, it has about it no feeling of stress and strain, its processes are hidden, its laws are covered. Yet behind all their completeness, these works have a law and a process which we who work on the lower level can in some measure analyse and reduce to a code. Christ saw in a flash the spiritual unsoundness which the modern psychologist analyses into such mental processes as "inhibition," the "complex," the "repres-

sion," the "censure." He saw by some subtle intuitive process beyond our comprehension the disease of His patient's mind, He treated it according to its true nature, but the process which may take us weeks of patient work was for Him the work of a moment.

We have perhaps sometimes known how some great spiritual genius has read the thoughts and solved the moral and intellectual difficulties which beset our course in a few minutes of conversation, resolving the doubts and hesitations which much argument and reading had failed to overcome. This he has done by a reading of our mind and an insight into the spiritual situation which appears to us little short of miraculous. In reality the procedure which he used, obeyed and followed a definite law. There was a swift analysis of our spiritual conflict, a true diagnosis of our disease, a sure and unerring application of the true remedy. We, after seeing this "mighty working," may analyse the method and reduce it to a formula. We may repeat the same procedure upon others, but we work slowly and cautiously always conscious of restrictive limitations, and consulting our text-books, as it were, at every turn. Yet the procedure of the master and of the pupil are not different. Both obey the one law, though the master acts swiftly and magisterially, and the pupil follows with anxious and cautious steps. There are indeed times when the disciple has simply to stand aside, letting go all his theories and forgetting his technique, realising that his patient is outside the need of his help, as with awe he watches the Master Himself taking the case out of His servant's hands, and healing it, as He did on earth, suddenly, unconditionally and completely. Such things happen still, and before such happenings we can only bow and adore.

It is a melancholy, but not by any means a novel, consideration that in this great department of Christian teaching the historic Churches should have to acknowledge themselves debtors, as indeed they are

debtors, to those outside—in this case to “Christian Scientists” and others, who have, amidst whatever mistakes and disasters, shown the way in which Christ has called His Church to walk. It rests with our own generation to decide whether those, few indeed in number compared with those who are perfectly contented with a purely physical treatment of their “dis-ease” (yet already to be counted by thousands), who believe that Christ has called them into this inheritance, shall have to go beyond the confines of the visible Church for the healing of their hurt, or whether they shall find it, where they can find it, if we have sufficient faith, in the visible fold of Christ.

Here, then, is a whole great department of prayer, almost uncharted still by the Church of Christ. Prayer is needed here, not sporadic, emotional, unrationalised, though such prayer will never be without its great reward, where it is the best that can be given, but that prayer which is rooted in the patient study of the mind of God, based upon a profound reverence for His “lawful” and scientific Nature, and following patiently, as a son loves to follow his father’s methods, the steps of the processes which He marks out for us.

Here, indeed, is a great door opened in heaven : it is for the Church to press in ; to discover and learn to use that medicine which is for the healing of the nations.

XII

FAITH, PRAYER AND THE  
WORLD'S ORDER

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## XII

# FAITH, PRAYER AND THE WORLD'S ORDER

## INTRODUCTION

*“ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God ; for he hath prepared for them a city.*

*“ And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise ; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”—Epistle to the Hebrews.*

THERE is a class of questions about prayer and its efficacy which can find no answer except in experience, but which with experience open out into further questions still unanswered. They are those which involve the consideration of what we mean by attributing to God supreme power over worldly events, by divine omnipotence, divine providence, and by that ultimate

harmony of what is and what ought to be, present as an inner experience to faith, as a vision of a new outward order to hope, which we call the Kingdom of God. It is the purpose of this essay to examine some of these questions and the assumptions which underlie them, and to attempt some picture of the meaning and value of prayer, considered in relation to outward events. It does not aim at providing anything like a complete philosophy of the subject.

There are always those who, like the Scribes and Pharisees, demand a plain answer to a plain question. But it is as true now as it was then that no such answer shall be given to them, save only the answer of the fact of the resurrection of Christ, and the faith, the hope and the illumination which this brings. But it is good to ask the questions, if by the criticism both of experience and still more of the values in which we put our faith we may be helped along the road by which those have travelled whom divine assurance has prompted to declare plainly that they sought a country.

It is with prayer as affecting the outward order of events, and the purposes of others than ourselves, that this essay is concerned. Prayer as communion of the individual with God, as the opening of the mind for strength and guidance, is comparatively simple ; and to those who believe in God at all presents at the outset no theoretical difficulties. Of course the language and character of such prayer will depend upon how those who use it conceive of God, and diverse theologies will produce all manner of different rules and paths of devotion. You may fail to understand the character of a person with whom you have held lifelong converse, or two people may draw conflicting portraits of a common friend ; but, except it be a lunatic, no one doubts the possibility of intercourse with any person. Men have held and hold extreme theories about the character of God ; but even among them no one has yet put forward the view that He is an irrational being and therefore

incapable of intercourse with His creatures. The most they have done is to suppose that only certain among men—specially qualified by piety or priestly attributes—are capable of converse with Him. But for the Christian all qualifications are possessed by Christ, through whom the way of communion is freely opened to all men.

But when you pass beyond the sphere of simple communion to that of petition for external things, a number of questions arise. Can prayer for ends beyond the inner needs of the individual be of any effect? Especially is prayer of any avail for ends which we call material? If so, ought one to pray for anything and everything that is desired, or only for certain things?

These are of that type of plain question which it is to be feared (or hoped) will not receive a plain answer, or at least not an answer which can be expressed in terms of cut-and-dried clearly defined conclusions. What underlies them is the sharp distinction we have made between the "spiritual" and the "material." How can a purely "spiritual" activity produce an effect in the outside world? and how could the belief that it can and does produce such effects square with what is known of the working of cause and effect in Nature? If certain atmospheric conditions are present to-day, it will rain to-morrow; is it then any use praying that it may not rain? Ought we perhaps to limit our prayers for effects in the material world to those which can be affected by personal activity, and which are therefore liable to direct spiritual influence? It is clear that before we can define our attitude to these questions we must ask, What is "material" and what is "spiritual"?

Then again, how am I to conceive of the effect of prayer in relation to the activity and power of God? If God both can and will in any case do everything that is good for us, how can prayer be an addition either to His power or to His will? Is there a sense

in which God will but cannot do everything without our co-operation in the form of prayer, or is there a sense in which He can but will not? Or, again, there is the ancient question of God's foreknowledge; if He foresees the end of all things from the beginning, then His action is predetermined, and how can prayer affect it?

These and similar questions may be multiplied unendingly, and have been multiplied since Caliban first ruminated upon Setebos. Their savour is ancient, but they are never out of date, because, like all the ultimate questions of religion, they find their answer not in theory or in theoretical demonstration, but in experience; and experience is never final and never conclusive, because it is never whole. Some find—or think they find—their prayers answered in ways surpassing expectation. But others equally sincere seem to find no answer but the echo of their own desire. In such a matter the experience of those who think they have found is of little avail for those who seek in vain. To me a rose which I have carefully but ignorantly tended may seem a miracle when it flowers. But my neighbour, an expert in rose-culture but not perhaps in emotion, may find it but a poor and ordinary specimen, and ill-grown at that. He will tell me that with more knowledge and less feeling I might in such a soil have produced a real “creation,” and labelled it, to boot, with my own name. “Perhaps,” I may reply, “with more knowledge and *more* feeling I might have tended a still finer growth, and found for it an apter name than that which you suggest.” But though I may secretly mock at his blindness, I can have no answer to his science, save willingness to learn it.

So it is with the subject we have to consider. Instances of remarkable “answers to prayer” can carry little conviction to those who have not experienced them; and behind all the show of evidence produced there is always a suspicion that if the effectiveness of prayer is all that its exponents claim for it, it should not be the

instances of answered prayer that are so rare as to be relatively wonderful and remarkable, but that rather it would be a wonderful thing that sincere prayer of any kind should fail to attain the desired good or to avert the threatened evil. There would seem to be a notable gap between the attempts made to maintain the supernatural virtue of prayer in relation to external things, and the simple unambiguous promise of Christ that whatsoever we ask in his name, believing, we shall receive it. In the face of Christ's teaching our efforts and expositions seem childish and insincere. Is there any possibility of equating his absolute and unqualified statements with the poverty and ambiguity of the mass of our experience, with what we have learnt of the world about us, with what we have come to assume about the natural order of events? In face of what actually happens, is our prized experience more than a history of inner feeling which makes mountains out of accidental molehills?

There are special reasons for raising these much vexed questions at the present time, reasons both of thought and of practice. In secular thought there is a feeling of new venture in the air, of an escape from the dreary and enlightened conviction of a machine-made world. Something of this movement can be felt also in contemporary religious thought. But it is difficult to illustrate anything in religion from generalisations about the thought of the time, because coherent thought is not yet recognised as an integral part of the common life of a religious community. Rather it enters, where it does enter, as the unwelcome gift of a few, and that only after being respectably tied up in the clothing of the ancient tradition of the moment; and it is by that time of respectable antiquity itself. This system has of course its advantages in a precarious kind of safety. But if you set out to satisfy a crowd of thirsty people from a filter through which clouded

water falls drop by drop, you must not be surprised if some prefer tainted water to fainting, and many turn into the neighbouring public-house.

But common practice is more tangible. And in religious practice a similar movement is apparent. We seem to have reached a climax and something of a collapse in the practice of a view of prayer worked out in terms of dynamic energy ; and there is with many a feeling of exhaustion and a desire for a more living faith in the strength of quietness and confidence.

In our time there has been a development and elaboration of the machinery of prayer, "a mobilisation of spiritual forces," which is paralleled only in extent and ingenuity by modern advertising methods—*other* advertising methods, one might almost have said, for indeed there is much real kinship between the two. Every one who is connected with a religious organisation in its multifarious forms is the recipient of an increasing number of pamphlets requesting his prayers upon an immense variety of details, full attention to which would require that his daily devotions should be arranged with all the exactness of a business office. They give the impression that it is supposed that the principal use of the prayers of the saints is to lubricate the wheels of our intricate religious organisations. It may of course be so ; no possibility is to be excluded at the outset. But it would seem that there is need of some principle or rule of proportion which has been lost or forgotten. So, too, in the organisation of common prayer. "Perpetual intercessions" demand the conveyance of deputations from outlying parishes of London to St. Paul's at dead of night, in order that successive bodies of overworked people may deprive themselves of sleep while their common needs are proclaimed for twenty-four hours at a stretch. This sort of thing strikes the imagination of people accustomed to advertisement, and doubtless heightens emotion. But the great emergency which has so

greatly enhanced the need and awakened the desire for common prayer has equally shown the absence of any clear principle to guide either its matter or its manner ; the consequence is a lack of a very necessary economy of strength and effort. It is a part of that weakness of our religion which makes it contribute as much to the restless incoherence of the public mind as to that stability and solidarity which it is a special function of religion to give. It is a strange interpretation of St. Paul's exhortation that we should "pray without ceasing."

These are perhaps somewhat superficial traits, and in any case it is not the purpose of this essay to deal specifically with the organisation of prayer for common ends. But the quantitative kind of principle on which this busy kind of effort seems to be calculated reveals some need for an examination of the assumptions which underlie it. Fortunately the history of religion is much greater than that of its public manifestations ; and the history of prayer is written in the communion of the individual soul with God, or in those unseen movements in which two or three are gathered spontaneously in the name of Christ. But this general conversion of Mary to the principles of Martha is in itself a sign of something wrong. And if the character of all this organised prayer is a symptom of what is commonly believed and taught about individual prayer, the need for an examination is great.

It is true that religious people have for long generations been schooled, under the guise of the duty of resignation to the mysterious will of God, to expect little in answer to their private prayers. But in a time when as never before the heaviness of sorrow, of broken dreams, and of an awakened consciousness of the power of evil, conflicts for the possession of men's minds with a sense of new visions and the dawn of greater hopes, there must come to many, and especially if they are led to turn again to the spoken promises of Christ,



the need to think anew over the deeper questions from which this stress of mind arises. It is not merely the solution of such difficulties as have been quoted, but a more positive end that we must have in view ; not the question whether we may pray at all, but how we may pray with a deeper and more effective faith and with a clearer vision.

The questions raised cannot be other than those well-worn ones already cited. They embrace of course the central problems of religion, the relation of the "material" to the "spiritual," the meaning of Providence, of God's omnipotence and man's freedom. But in religion all advance comes from dwelling on things which have no final answer but faith and hope. And since prayer is the mainspring of religion, there is good reason for raising them in this special connection, since it gives the enquiry a special and vital application.

So our plain questions widen out until they cover the whole of what we mean by nature and by God, of how we interpret the processes of history and how we envisage the end to which we would fain see them moving. It is clear that the treatment of such questions in an essay of the present dimensions must be inadequate and partial in the extreme. It makes no pretensions to philosophical completeness or to the substantiation of all its many sweeping assertions. Its language must be crude and dogmatic ; it aims more at describing a state of mind than at making out a case ; it has a humbler, though at the same time a wider, aim than that of contributing anything new to the philosophy of the subject. On such a subject it is perhaps more important that the writer should give himself away than that he should emphasise the obvious fact of his many-sided ignorance.

The essay is divided into two parts. The first discusses the nature of prayer in relation to the regular sequence of cause and effect in nature, and makes a

framework for the second part, which treats of the meaning of divine providence and omnipotence, of human freedom, and of the spiritual community in which Christian faith sees the meaning and purpose of the world. At the end there is an attempt to picture the place and value of prayer in the pilgrimage of the individual through the world, and of the world towards its goal. It is very general and fragmentary. But to carry it out in detail would need another essay.

## PART I

### NATURAL LAW AND SPIRITUAL CREATION

He who prays seeks a country other than that from whence he goes out. He would pass in thought from a "natural" to a "spiritual" sphere, and so bring the spiritual back into play within the natural. But how this may be is a question which may well perplex those to whom the natural is presented as a series of fixed and unbending generalisations, or the spiritual as a body of arbitrary and inexorable decrees.

Tradition has so highly painted the opposition between the two countries, and set so great a gulf between them, that many have found no hope for the journey except on the magic carpet of the East. They would shut their eyes and be there. But the danger of this course of action is the liability to discover on opening them again that it was a dream :

I saw pale kings and princes too,  
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all ;  
They cried " La Belle Dame sans Merci  
Hath thee in thrall ! "  
I saw their starved lips in the gloam,  
With horrid warning gaping wide,  
And I awoke and found me here  
On the cold hill's side.

There hovers the alternative between enchantment and disillusion. At best to alternate between two incompatible worlds is a precarious manner of life, more desperate than helpful. The true pilgrim does not believe in frontiers. The best which he will have is the best of both worlds : he may renounce the pomps and vanities of this world, but never the world itself. Dust and ashes are no conclusive argument to him ; they exist only as containing the seeds of a new life. He believes heartily in the resurrection of the body. But this faith is not an easy one to maintain—at least in a reasonable form—in an age which is dominated in practice by the idea of organisation and in theory by the belief in the universality of intellectual generalisations. If a pilgrimage is converted into a railway journey or a route march, its meaning is apt to be lost or retained only in the form of a mysticism which escapes the fetters of space by declaring them irrelevant ; attempts to drown the sound of wheel with song. Our pilgrim becomes a dreamer again.

But the situation is too serious for this expedient to serve. Not only faith and hope but thought must be taken into partnership, and a tired argument reopened.

Our plain questions about spiritual and natural causation will lead us far afield before we have done with them. What we shall aim at is to consider how the distinction between natural and spiritual causes comes about, what is its meaning, and what is implied in the belief, which prayer carries with it, in the omnipresence of the spiritual. Again, how is a synthesis to be found between the idea of law and its universality, which intelligence seems to demand, and that of the special activity of the Spirit which prayer must needs suppose.

We venture on a sea where many have been drowned and where many derelicts and phantom ships endanger and beguile the voyager. Let us beg the question and

pray that the one star may shine whose guidance is infallible—the truth which is also love.

## I

If prayer has a body—if it is not merely an inner mystical communion without relation to the external world—it implies a belief that things can be made to happen otherwise than by the paths of “natural” causation.

Of course any belief in God implies that all causation is spiritual in the long run, but the run may be so long as to make the belief irrelevant for practical purposes. Prayer is concerned with the here and now, not with an indefinitely remote eternity. It supposes that there is through the whole course of events in the material or psychical an unseen movement of something which we call spiritual. We distinguish between two ways in which things are caused to happen, one of which we call natural, and can analyse into a sequence of cause and effect: the other we call spiritual, and certain examples of it super-natural; seeing no process which we can analyse or reduce to terms of cause and effect. The “natural” method is by starting some sequence of movement, beginning with your own body and ending, after a more or less prolonged chain of movements, with the particular effect which you desire to produce—at least if you calculated rightly. The other supposition is that an event—whether it is a change in the weather or in some one else’s mind—may be brought about by the direct action of the spirit, without intermediate physical impact. You will, and it is done. In the particular case of prayer there is as intermediary between your desire and its fulfilment the movement of the will of God, but for the moment the point is that the impulse to the weather to change or to your friend to do what you think is good for him instead of what he thinks, is communicated without any *visible* cause.

The "natural" method is of course not confined to strictly physical things, but ranges through the whole of nature up to the innermost movements of the human mind or the most complicated behaviour of human society—political, economic, and religious as well. If you want your friend to go for a walk with you, you *may*, if you are big and he is small, effect your object by seizing his arm and keeping him going at your side through the exercise of physical violence alone. It is true that in that case his companionship will, unless he is a singularly Christian man, be confined rather strictly to the physical act of walking; but there he will be. But also you might compel him by threats or induce him by persuasion or by merely suggesting to him that Sullington Down looked inviting.

All these would be "natural" in the sense that each of them could be analysed and stated as examples of general statements of the form that the cause A is followed by the effect B. But if at the moment when you felt your still unspoken desire that he should accompany you, it suddenly occurred to him not to go to sleep by the fire, but to come round to your house as though the idea of taking a walk was quite his own invention—in that case, unless you shelved it as a coincidence, you would have to put it down to a "spiritual" communication, the nature of which you could not trace by any process of observation though you might call it telepathy and invent analogies for it. But if it became common and was reducible to rules, it would also have become "natural." Prayer, considered apart from the character of God, is a kind of telepathic communication between me and my friend, or between me and the weather. But if it is reducible to any rules other than those dictated by the moral character of God, it will cease to be prayer properly so called and will become either magic or applied science. The belief that I can only pray effectually in a certain position or with certain ceremonies or ritual is magic;

the discovery of new external conditions or ways of exercising influence otherwise than by simply laying your desire before God would be a kind of (probably ill applied) science. There has probably never been a religion into which magic has not entered ; and it is certainly not uncommon to practise hypnotism or other kinds of psychic violence and to call it prayer. But both these are irrelevant to our present enquiry except as examples of what is not meant by prayer.

The very crude line which we have drawn between what we call "natural" and what we call "spiritual" will of course require further investigation. It is a line which is not always easy to draw, mainly because on any reasonable supposition there is no such line. We commonly speak of God and nature as two separate and distinct entities. But what we are really talking about is two ends of our experience, which, for the reason that our experience at either end is partial, we can never properly equate. Our common tendency is to round off the fragments at either end into a fictitious whole, and then to wonder that our two fictions agree but ill together, or that any concordat which we manage to make between them is so fragile. We mark off a space for God, and behold nature invades it as knowledge increases. There is nothing so tedious as the spectacle of the Church militant on its defence against these supposed encroachments.

What we have first to guard against is any supposition that the natural and the spiritual are two separate compartments of existence : that there are some things which are physical or natural—like stocks or stones or my body ; some which are spiritual—like, let us say, angels ; and some perhaps which are an uncomfortably joined mixture of both. Nor are they two distinct processes, so that some things, like rain, happen according to natural processes, and others like the Reformation by spiritual processes. If you once make a fixed line between them, or separate them into water-tight

compartments, there is very little chance that you will ever be able to join them together again.

Before science was invented there was of course no distinction between natural and spiritual causes. Everything was personal and individual—"full of gods," as the saying of the wise man went. Earth and sky were peopled and all the processes of the seasons attended by their familiar spirits. All things that happened reflected the habits of a host of unseen but vividly pictured beings—wayward often, evil sometimes, but confined within the limits of an unfathomable and vaguely moral "justice." There was not any real distinction between the animate and the inanimate, between natural and spiritual causes. Then it was not only natural to pray, but men could use magic aids more powerful than mere persuasion to win the favour of a needed helper or to defeat the malice of an unseen enemy. If prayer or spell were unsuccessful, well, one could not always be sure that in the commonwealth of heaven one's special protector could always have his way. For one's enemy too was not without powerful assistance.

In the Old Testament there are many traces of this. Jehovah was mighty indeed, but when the king of Moab went so far as to sacrifice his own son to Chemosh, then there was great wrath against Israel, and they departed from him, and returned to their own tents.<sup>1</sup> Jehovah was a great god of war, and had driven the gods of Canaan before him; but, once in, it was not so certain that he could ensure the kindly fruits of the earth in due season. Agriculture was not in his line. Would it not be as well to make doubly sure by setting up a high place to the local Baal, who had tended the ground from all time? Even in the later ages, when the supremacy of the one God was certain, even in the New Testament, the world is peopled with "principalities and powers of the air," and there is still no distinction between spiritual and natural causes. But of course it

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings iii. 26, 27.

was never so much in the Hebrew as in the Graeco-Roman world that this "pandaemonism" attained its richest development ; and it has survived and flourished in the local and professional saints and Madonnas of the Catholic Church, though at a gradually further remove from nature as nature has been appropriated by science. Even in the Protestant north we have never been able entirely to discard the glamour of faery romance and the romantic view of nature, or to believe that things are merely what they seem.

Behind this view of a host of wayward and contending personalities, into whose conduct of the world men were able to read their own loves and their own strife with one another and with nature, there always lurked a unifying and unfathomable power—sometimes God, sometimes a nearly impersonal but never immoral necessity, unseeing perhaps in its effects, but rooted in an ultimate justice, blind to the individual but careful of the community. You might call it chance or fate, but you were aware in the back of your mind that it had a moral meaning ; it was personal too, in a dim way, because the impersonal was not yet born, but ancient of days and dim of sight, not liable to the impulses of more warm-blooded beings. Its office was to check exuberance and to visit excess rather than to stamp a more positive impress on outward things. The foreground was filled by beings of a more lively imagination.

With the growth of intelligence and self-consciousness this mythical world is invaded by two great forces of civilisation, which we will call rationality and spirituality. Between them exists, both in thought and in practice, a friction that is the "strife" which the ancient philosopher declared to be "the father of all things." All advance upon the road of our particular enquiry depends upon willingness to bear with the discomforts of this somewhat exhausting, but always in the end illuminating partnership. Disasters happen when one of the two is allowed to shake off the other.



Rationality is the child of perception and its business is with the externalities of experience—that which is not oneself. Its starting-point is analysis or dissection and its purpose is to represent the world as a system of related terms—as it were a diagram. It regards everything objectively—things are just what they are, and there is no more to be said; what the self feels about them must be eliminated. The object is to discover what things are in terms of relation to one another.

But spirituality seeks an inner and more intimate acquaintance with the world. It finds a wholeness in every experience which defies analysis into subject and object, and which finds expression not in terms of fact but of value. Its hymns are the offspring of what seems a closer union than that which the formal terms of reason permit. It deals with immediacy and not with the remoter products of reflection. Its knowledge is to that of rationality as my knowledge of a friend, the knowledge of immediate acquaintance, is to my knowledge of a neighbour, which is made up of inferences from what I see of his habits. Its language is not that of logic but of communion.

It is the whole work of philosophy to establish a right valuation of these two modes of knowledge and of their relation to reality. But for our present purpose we can confine ourselves more or less to the sphere of the historical—what we may believe about what happens and what may happen.

Rationality, we may say, is concerned with the behaviour of things, which it reduces to general relations of cause and effect. It believes that everything is like its own operations, governed by logical first principles. The criticism of these first principles and their application to what happens are its great pursuits. In a concrete event it finds the combined working of a number of causal series; and it is always trying to analyse into their ultimate components and to

relate together the elements which go to the making of an event. A thing or person is for it a series of events—physical, chemical, biological, psychological, ethical, political,—and having reduced you and your breakfast to these general terms, it must go on to examine the relation between the different series themselves. In the end it hopes to picture everything as a part of one comprehensive diagram.

In history it looks at things from behind, and must aim ideally at exhibiting them as instances of mathematical and physical generalisations in order that it may trace the causes which have brought them to their present conditions. Its explanation of anything is to discover the temporal and spacial conditions which surrounded its origin, and the "laws" which govern its development. When it talks about the origin of life, it means a chemical condition such that while at one moment the behaviour which it calls life is absent, it will be present the next moment without the addition of any but a physical or chemical stimulus. When it talks about the origin of religion it means that element in the behaviour of primitive people which in progress of history becomes transformed into what we call religious behaviour. Its ultimate ground is a belief in the rationality of the behaviour of all that exists—that where at any time or place there are identical conditions analysable into ABCD . . . present at one moment, they will always be followed by behaviour analysable into WXYZ . . ., provided, of course, that nothing is added to or subtracted from the mixture. It believes that the future is like the past, and is calculable in so far as the present is known and understood. The human present is of course too complicated to be either known in detail or understood in general; rough predictions are all that can be made of it. But for the planet on which we live can be predicted with greater certainty a gradual freezing (that is, barring accidents arriving from the remoter regions of space), because

physical conditions are less complex in particular and more understandable in general.

But for spirituality this calculating view of history seems to miss out its meaning. "If there is behaviour," it says, "there must be something which behaves. All you have done by your rational process is to discover how it works, and you assume that it must always go on working in the same way. But unless there is something which works, the whole business is without meaning." Rationality may admit that that is so; "but it is not my business," it says, "to start with the supposition that there is a meaning in your sense. If you will propose a meaning, I am quite ready to criticise your proposals in the light of my discoveries and my logic; but it is not my business to assert or to be bound by any such dogmas as your statement that the world must mean something. Why must it?" Spirituality has to answer that it is its own "must"; it must find a meaning in it, and look for something which exists behind all the exterior analysis of rationality. Otherwise spirituality would have to regard itself either as a delusion, or as an inexplicable excrescence upon a merely rational world; and either conclusion would be abhorrent to it. So while it is quite ready to recognise the truth of rational analysis as far as it goes, it feels that this process is concerned with the parts to the exclusion of the whole.

It is in values that spirituality puts its faith. And when religion asserts, as it must, that everything is spiritual, it means that behind all the series of cause and effect into which science analyses the behaviour of the world, the real thing is value and response to value. If there are atoms, or whatever you call the units of physical behaviour, they are also units of spiritual existence, and the ground of their behaviour is always response to value.

But this belief is not capable of any but poetic expression. The whole point about the spiritual appre-

hension of values is that it is immediate and not analysable into logical relations ; subject and object make for it a whole which loses its point upon analysis. It is all very well for mathematics to declare that two lovers are two, but they know better that they are one, though of course there would be no point in their being one if they were not also two. The only knowledge of response to value which we can have is in our immediate own self-consciousness ; but the chief characteristic of rationalised "nature" is the absence of self-consciousness. Hence any attempt to describe the processes of nature in spiritual terms must be akin to poetry and not rational theory. The attempt to rationalise the supernatural which theology has so often made, is like rewriting Wordsworth in scientific jargon and calling it natural (or "supernatural") history. Of course there must be a connection and a partnership between these two ways of looking at things ; but what it is or should be is what we are setting out to enquire.

The outward behaviour of things is general—like a common language—and reducible to general terms. But the values of spiritual apprehension are particular—the virtue of a work of art is never analysable into its parts. From a rational point of view to be unable to generalise is to be a fool ; from the artistic—which is the expression of the spiritual—"to generalise is to be an idiot," as Blake said. "To particularise is the great distinction of merit." "He who would be good to another must do it in minute particulars." "The hairs of your head are numbered." For rationality the particular is an excrescence until it is dissected into and seen as an instance of general terms ; but it is just the generality of mere words which prevent them from being more than a makeshift for spiritual expression. The ultimate of rationality is universal principles—for spirituality the infinite is particular. For rationality there is Matter but not matters—things are an accident of matter ; Being not beings—beings are appearances of

Being. But there is not spirit but particular spirits. And God the Infinite Spirit is none the less particular. So the starting-point of spirituality's view of the world is not a collection of principles but a story of creation ; its middle is not a hypothesis and its criticism, but a faith and its venture ; and its end is a vision and purpose, not a calculation or an expectation. There is no general good, but only the particular good of each : there is in general no answer to the problem of evil, but a particular answer whenever it is embraced as suffering and confessed as sin.

Because language is a rational concern it is necessary to write of the spiritual and the rational as if they were separate faculties or workings of the mind. But, of course, they are not, and cannot exist apart from one another. Truth is a spiritual value, and behind all reasoning is the immediate awareness of truth and of the coherence of truths which is the basis of all rationality ; and the appreciation of truth is aesthetic and moral as well as purely intellectual. Imagination too—the leap of the mind in advance of conscious thought—is as necessary to the man of science as to the artist. On the other hand, the history of a work of art is a long and careful study and practice of general rules which must be understood before they can be successfully broken. You may become a futurist and try to escape from form, but it is really because you have revolted against formalism ; and the long introduction with which you preface the catalogue of your exhibition invites the spectator to regard your works as illustrations of a general theory, which is a theory still even if it be an odd one. The spectator will go about looking for a picture which is more than an illustration and has a particular value of its own which he can enter into without the necessity of first imbibing your particular psychological intellectualism.<sup>1</sup> If he finds it, he will be

<sup>1</sup> "Futurism" in art is a parallel movement to that of "modernism" (in its more advanced forms) in religion. Both try to escape from the traditionalism and materialism with which the modern world is beset into a psychological heaven of their own con-

ready to listen to what you have to say about the theory of the business, and to appreciate what you are driving at with it. But as it is you seem not only to have put the cart before the horse, but to have invented (or borrowed) a vehicle which needs a singularly disjointed kind of quadruped to push it.

If you try to oust either rationality or spirituality, they will combine to take revenge of you. They must work together ; but there is always tension between them, and they pull in opposite directions. To reach an equilibrium between them is the aim in thought of philosophy, in expression of art, in conduct of ethics ; the aim of religion is that wholeness of mind and body which binds all these things together, but is more than any of them.

## II

The relation of rationality to spirituality in religion and its necessity to spiritual health, is illustrated in that disease of religion which rejects rationality. We will call it "piety," though in truth it is but a corruption of piety. Piety, in the ancient and proper sense of the word, is reverence for the authors of our being—parents, nation. It is the respect which youth must pay to age, the future to the past out of which it is made. And sincerity of vision or effort for the future will depend upon the depth and reality of this reverence. There is no true revolutionary who is not also conservative. A healthy religion is always revolutionary, and piety is the conservative force in it. But like patriotism, which is of course a form of piety, religious piety can be good

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trivance ; one would throw overboard the nuisance of history and the other the boredom of natural form. But in so doing both become eccentricities, though they may be among the eccentricities which have contributed to the world's rather unsteady progress. For it is of the essence of both religion and art that they should provide the mind with something more firm to hold on than a reduplication of its own unstable equilibrium. "Catholic" modernism is to some extent saved by its tenacity of the idea of the Church, but the psychological hubble-bubble which in many forms is put forward from other quarters as the beginning and end of religion is a somewhat precarious substitute for salvation.

or bad—good if it is based on sincere service to the future, regarding itself as the steward of eternal and living values ; bad if it rests upon a satisfaction with its own present and with its possession of the past which has made it what it is, and looks upon itself as the fortunate life-tenant of an entail. It is the difference between possession and being possessed. “Piety” renders God thanks for its possession of revealed truth, while spiritual religion asks to be possessed by the spirit of truth in order that it may read aright the message of the past for the future. What you possess is the *externals* of past spiritual expression ; you possess the words of the prophet, but if you would have his spirit you must suffer yourself to be possessed by it. “Piety,” with its emphasis on its possession of the letter, is the author of the biblical and ecclesiastical infallibilities which more than anything else bar out the spirit.

The religious interpretation of history is a kind of poetry which tends to become mythology as knowledge increases : “piety” takes the mythology of the past and, calling it history, buries the true values which it contains under the dust of past interpretation. In relation to the present it has an irrelevancy in which it takes a perverse delight. It sets up a distinction between “the world” and its own domain, and the result is that an increasing department of life—all that which reason makes its own—is marked off as secular, and religion is regarded as irrelevant to it. Yet “piety” is full of worldly adventure and will “compass sea and earth to make a proselyte.” But in the spiritual sphere it seeks not adventure but security. It has a future as irrelevant as its past, and, taking refuge from the actual present which it calls “the world,” waits for the time when the world shall be exploded into dust and ashes leaving the pious in uninterrupted enjoyment of their private heaven.

In conduct “piety” is the father of worldliness,—turning its attention always to outward effects and

neglecting the underlying spiritual reality. So in thought it is the father of rationalism, the form of intellectual acrobatics which treats its premises as infallible, and spends its time in the attempt to force the whole of experience into their mould. The premises of "piety" are a corpus of divine revelation, which it is impious to question. It must perforce be blind to contradiction, and spends much of its time deducing irrelevant conclusions from false premises. Thought is for it a game of chess in which the pieces are given, and need only be moved about according to rule to meet the exigencies of the moment. "Science" is the "hand-maid" of theology; or a furniture dealer from whose wares one may choose whatever happens to fit the preconceived style of decoration, and reject what is amiss.

But science or rational knowledge is not the hand-maid but the purgatory of religion. If there is such a thing as truth, and if truthfulness is a spiritual value, then right values cannot be embalmed in false beliefs. By the criticism of the terms in which the spirituality of the past has expressed itself the dusty accumulations of "piety" are removed, and the way opened to a clearer spiritual insight. The particulars of mythology are purged in the generalisations of rational criticism; and the process is a part of that death unto life which is the condition of all spiritual progress. "Piety" knows and caricatures this condition, inviting its victims to a form of intellectual and moral suicide, for the letter of which it is never at a loss to find scriptural authority. But against the real thing historical religion, which has seldom been spiritual *in the bulk*, but has always desired as much to possess the world as to save it, has ever revolted. The history of the relation of science to religion has been a long and tedious series of rear-guard actions in which religion has been forced to retire from one position after another—or else it has taken refuge in the security of an increasingly irrelevant belief and practice; it has thought to bar out the world, and has



built a prison for itself. It is of this self-preservative piety that it is written that there must come a time of disillusion in which its house is left unto it desolate.

But while piety in this form is one of those general maladies which make it so difficult for many honest and single-minded souls to join in corporate religion, no individual is ever merely pious. Faith is stronger in the end, and the spirit is always breaking down the strongholds which the timidity of the faithful has built for it. Even the "piety" of posterity reveres the saint whom contemporary piety has condemned.

In Western Christianity the chief difficulty is that when the Church accepted the patronage of worldly authority and the dream of worldly conquest, it was inevitable that the spiritual community should become a worldly institution, and become the more liable to the instincts of self-preservation and the desire for supremacy. And "piety" is the bulwark of this form of institutionalism and of the sectarianism which has been its necessary outcome. It has come to be regarded as a mark of loyalty that those who are the mouthpieces of these institutions should conceal their spiritual individuality under the garb of piety, and speak in the strange languages which have become so complete a safeguard against the understanding of the faith by the common people. But, after all, scientific knowledge and the belief that truth is the object of search rather than the inheritance of tradition are quite modern inventions in Christendom; there is always ground for the hope that sectarian piety may repent of itself and of its false emphases, and discover that there is greater strength in freedom of thought than in the attempt to maintain unbroken a traditional form of expression.

It was necessary that Christianity should become interwoven with the world if it was to be the channel of the world's spiritual development. But in becoming itself worldly the Church has confounded the distinction between the material and the spiritual, and in our time

the full tragedy of this confusion is apparent. Still the historical and spiritual reality of Christ is undying, and its operation unresting. But the first condition of a visible renewal in fact and doctrine is not the restatement or reorganisation of past beliefs and practices, but a clearer apprehension of spiritual reality and a faith in spiritual values. In fact, of course, these things go on side by side; and that is why even the most learned theologians are conscious that they are not wasting their time, though they may appear to the uninitiated observer to spend their days washing rather faded linen in public. But the theologian and the apologist must wait upon the prophet who can choose out of the multitude of their accumulations what is relevant, and clothe it in the language of a living faith, before it can acquire meaning. In our time the material and the rational have outrun the spiritual, and no falling back upon the past can avail. In the condition of the world at large this is clear enough. In the Church the great expansion of competitive organisation, the rivalry between criticism and "apologetics," and the lively disputes of opposing "schools of thought" have become so engrossing that those within the fold have little time to think, and those without have little chance to discover, what it is all about. Meanwhile the world has been busy on more urgent affairs, and in the issue sectarian Christianity lies helpless and its temples in ruins.

At such a time religion is called back from its pre-occupation with details and from its worship of the past to a revaluation of its ideals and its faith for the future. Men talk of the need for a "revival," but they talk in vain unless they mean a new birth of a faith set free from the worldly trappings in which unfaith has bound it. A faith which seeks refuge from a supposed world of explosive dust and ashes, will so encumber itself with armour that it will be unable to lift its head or disclose its living features. Our pilgrim

is bound not for security but for adventure ; and he does not set out, as a soldier does, with detailed orders for a campaign which he has not planned. Rather, having confidence in the trustworthiness of the voice which called him forth, and in the promise of guidance from friendly dwellers on the way, he will look to gain as he goes both a knowledge of the country through which he must travel, and clearer information about the goal to which he is journeying. And the song with which he beguiles the way will be less concerned with reminiscences of his starting-point than with the new things which each day brings, and the further news which he gains about his journey's end. It is when he is rather lost that he will find himself wishing that he could have stayed longer in his last night's lodging.

### III

Religion cannot do otherwise than picture its pilgrimage in terms of selfhood and personality, because it is grounded on self-consciousness, and its values are inseparable from personal identity. But in the world it finds its selfhood imprisoned in selfishness and limitation, and rent by the conflicts between individual and partial interests. Its pilgrimage is from the childish tragedy of competitive self-importance and self-absorption, wherein men seek to enlarge themselves by imprisoning themselves in an accumulation of opinions and possessions and to enslave what they cannot understand, to a community in which all true individual values are fulfilled and harmonised by being embraced in a larger whole. Its vision is of a Kingdom of God ; and in Christianity God Himself, in whom the ideal is made both actual for the individual and possible for the world, is envisaged as a community of Persons. The spiritual strength of religion at any time is measured by the degree in which it is able to lift men and all their varied interests out of a merely

individual and self-regarding belief and practice into a consciousness of the spiritual community. Communion is its end, and its interpretation of the world is in terms of spiritual community. But historically it finds itself in a half-way house, and the law of its pilgrimage is always a "death unto life." "He that findeth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life" for the sake of an ideal "shall find it"; there is no need to enlarge upon this familiar paradox of all spiritual life. What we have to do is to consider it in relation to thought and knowledge, and in relation to our interpretation of the outer world of history and nature.

In thought the processes of scientific reason, with its analysis and its generalisations, are the path through death to a larger life by which spiritual apprehension must travel. It can only retain its childlike simplicity and confidence if it is willing to grow up. And there are liable to be periods of eclipse. A child's world is at will whatever he may decide upon as a suitable field for adventure fitting to his mood. But when he goes to school he must in outward things surrender his individuality to the body of tradition and convention into which he is thrown, and become part of a system. Only later, after a period of eclipse, does he regain his individuality, no longer of the self-absorbed kind, but as part of a community of thought and purpose. Outward things must be seen to have a reality of their own, and must be lost as the pliable instruments of fancy before they can be regained as the framework of a communal life.

Religion, starting as the expression of a tribal consciousness, with its particular and preferential deities and its private destinies and revelations, must perpetually go through this process if it is to live or to retain its spiritual character. It may retain a childlike faith that nothing is really dead or foreign to its inner spiritual consciousness; but it cannot retain the irrelevancy of childishness to fact. It must speak the language of the

community and not a private dialect, or its prayers will become incantations, its ritual magic, and its prophecy a speaking with tongues, which, as St. Paul said, may edify the speaker but cannot enlighten the congregation. If it believes honestly in the spirituality of the world, it must recognise that the condition of preserving inviolate its spiritual faith is the recognition of the inviolability of truth and reason. Whatever metaphysical arguments it may have to urge in favour of an ultimately spiritual view of the world, in relation to history and to actuality, science is its necessary and essential complement, and the instrument of its education.

Science is not the whole of education, nor does it profess the whole of truth ; it is that stage in education which merges the particular in the general ; but it cannot perform the task of rediscovering the particular in the community, which is the further end of religion.

"Piety," or backward-looking religion, is immersed in the particular. Its history is a series of particular acts of God, its duty the observance of a number of particular commandments, and its prayer the instrument for obtaining particular benefits and averting particular disasters. Its explanation of the world is an account of the ingenuity of the creator manifested in the details of its construction, and its wisdom an accumulation of special revelations accorded to meet the needs of particular occasions and seasons. There is really no such thing for it as an outer world, for everything that exists is but the breath of God, and God is the echo of piety itself. It decides what it is going to find in the world, finds it, pronounces it a miracle, and is content.

The birth of science is the discovery of an outer world which is not so easily amenable, but has habits of its own, expressible not in terms of personal emotions but of habits of the mind itself. Thought is discovered to be related to definite ideal objects which are what they are quite independently of what you or I think about them. The basis of scientific investigation is the negation

of private or irrelevant interests. If you want to find how a thing works it is irrelevant and may be misleading to start with a fixed belief as to what it is for. The development of science was arrested for centuries by the intrusion into it of people's notions of what things were for, and their desire to discover a purpose (which they had determined on beforehand) in everything that existed. People always want to know the whole without study of the part. One who easily makes friendships will be attracted to a person by any casual trait of mind or body which he finds agreeable, and will proceed to form from that and his own prejudices an imaginary notion of what sort of person his new friend is. When he finds him act in a way contrary to his expectation, he will be shocked and resentful. But in a more solid friendship the mutual affection and inner sympathy which two people have for one another will make them more interested to understand than to judge one another's particular ways of going on. Science has in its inner awareness of the agreements of thought, which are the basis of logic, its assurance of the rational unity of experience, and is content to try to understand this unity by the study of the particulars of the world's behaviour, rather than to force upon the world a preconceived notion of what kind of unity it is. And after many centuries of conflict with predetermined systems it has at last established its right to dispassionate enquiry.

The principle of the uniformity of nature is little else than the charter of this right. But its application to any whole of existence, whether a person or a tree, an arm-chair or the battle of Waterloo, is an abstract ideal until all the particular details about the whole in question are known. Everything is necessary in general, but nothing in particular ; when a thing has happened and its context is examined, it is seen that, things being what they were, it had to happen like that. But until it happened, things might have been otherwise. Given

a set of external conditions, and you being what you are, there is only one way in which you can express yourself. But what you are is never wholly given : something in you, previously unknown to yourself or to any one else, may enter into the equation and produce an unforeseen and unforeseeable result. "It is necessary that the Son of Man should be betrayed, but woe unto that man through whom He is betrayed." It was never *necessary* that Judas should become the betrayer, though it became more and more probable as time went on.

The method of science is to separate out of any concrete experience elements which it finds repeated elsewhere, and to find in these examples of a general law or rational habit of things. Any given thing is known in so far as all its elements can be thus stated. A tree is known scientifically in so far as its total behaviour is seen as the sum of a number of known habits of things—physical, chemical and all the rest—and in so far as the relations between these different series themselves are able to be stated in general formulae. But this ideal of knowledge is infinitely distant, and the reality of any given tree is far more than what is known about it. The most important thing about it is that it is an individual whole ; and any generalisations which science may make about any parts of its behaviour are liable to correction until they are related to all the other parts. Further, any generalisations about any species of tree may have to be corrected in relation to the particular specimen growing outside your window.

The crucial point about scientific knowledge is the discovery of how the different series into which it analyses the world's behaviour—from the merely physical behaviour of atoms to the psychological and ethical behaviour of human beings in society—are related. In the first flush of the success of physical science it was thought that everything was simply reducible to mechanics ; but the growth of biological and physiological science has led more and more away from this

crude and youthful hypothesis. The vitalistic theories of to-day recognise that the behaviour of living beings is not so easily reducible. In their more imaginary and less scientific flights we are told of life and matter waging war in all sorts of romantic ways. The sciences which deal with human behaviour are still in their early infancy ; we cannot tell what will emerge from them.

But meanwhile science has no formulae for uniting the disjointed series of generalisations which make its different branches ; and while these branches are so disjointed as well as incomplete in themselves it is necessary that its account of any concrete whole of existence should be both partial and inexact. Its generalisations do not cover the whole ground, and are themselves approximations and liable to correction. And since the essential identity of a person (or thing for that matter) resides in its wholeness and in its inner community with the whole of existence, and is not reducible to the partial characteristics of behaviour and construction which it shares with others, no scientific analysis or construction can contain the special quality of individuality in which spiritual values reside. In order to understand the action of a living body you must dissect it, and to dissect it is to kill it. So it is with the generalisations of science ; death is general, but life is particular. So science is necessarily agnostic in its method and in its account of the world. It can never do more than be building a scaffold for the visions of spiritual intuition ; but faith can never do more than build an imaginary and poetic structure round this scaffold ; and the forms of faith's expression must continually suffer death in order that their spirit may live.<sup>1</sup> Science is the organ of this death, but also

<sup>1</sup> So the forms of Greek thought were the framework for the early intellectual expression of Christianity. Neither could have done without the other ; but Christianity remains "to the Greeks foolishness." Liturgical and Credal Christianity still speaks in Greek : the advantage of retaining ancient forms of expression is that no reasonable person can suppose you to mean by them exactly what was originally intended : so there is room for "free thought." But even this has its limitations, and there is a time when obsolescence becomes excessive.



a way to the renewal of life. It is not agnostic in its end, but is a *via negativa* through which the spiritual truth of God and of the Kingdom of God is purged of the worldly and selfish values which men are always prone to intrude upon it. Science rejects as imaginary and irrelevant any attempt to introduce the spiritual into the workings of nature under the guise of "the unseen operation of a higher law"; such language has no meaning for it; nor can it know anything of the action of divine omnipotence in nature; God could be for it no more than a hypothetical first cause; and a hypothetical deity is of small intellectual or moral value.

The effect of the entry of scientific knowledge and criticism into the world is to turn spiritual faith back upon its true task, which is not to explain or expound the past, but to create the future. The ideals of knowledge and of faith are complementary to one another, but in partial experience they can never be equated. Faith cannot become knowledge, and is lost when it tries; knowledge cannot exhaust faith or become a substitute for it, and when it tries it loses its own truthfulness. For science a view of the phenomenal world as a related whole is the ideal of knowledge; and the principle of the uniformity of nature is the basis of its operations and the pledge that its goal is ideally attainable. For faith the vision of a spiritual community or Kingdom of God is the end of creation, and a belief in God is its statement of its confidence in its ideal. But the value of the belief depends not upon success in finding room for it in the world of scientific generalisation, but upon the spiritual content which is given to it. Reverence for truth for its own sake—what Socrates called willingness to follow the argument wherever it might lead—is much more important to faith than any body of theological doctrines; and the possibility of retaining the beliefs will depend more upon truthfulness than upon

the special pleadings of apologetics. It is always true that he who doeth the will shall know of the doctrine.

## IV

The world of our experience is a process and struggle from the physical to the spiritual. The merely physical—a mathematics of outward form—is its historical and rational starting-point; the spiritual elements of intelligence, of purpose and of value, enter into and transform the physical and give it a meaning. From the point of view of scientific knowledge the process is evolutionary, it is understood in so far as it is found to be expressible as the unfolding of regular causal series. From the point of view of faith it is apocalyptic—a history of successive “creations,” the birth of new values, fulfilling and transforming what was before. There is no contradiction between these two ways of stating the thing; one is a description of the outward process as observation and reason reveal and relate its complex mechanism; the other looks and finds in it a vision of the growth and possibility of the self and its inner relations and values, which give a meaning to the whole. All thought is an illustration of this twofold path of understanding. I may carry on a long process of logical analysis and reasoning, which waits for its meaning until at the end some truth comes suddenly upon me and illuminates the whole. Without the previous process of reasoning I should not have apprehended it, or if it had occurred to me inconsequently, I should not have understood its place in the scheme of things. The logical process set up a framework into which the truth entered when I had made ready for it, and had prepared a place and an office for it in the community of my experience. But without it the logical structure I had built would have been no more than a house to let. So, in fact as well as in thought, the evolutionary or external

process and that which we call the apocalyptic are complementary to one another. At no point in the process can you explain one in terms of the other, any more than you can explain yourself in terms of your body or your body in terms of yourself. They are bound to one another, and the interaction of the body and its inhabiting self is one of the most important fields of study as well as being the crucial point of religious struggle ever since and before St. Paul cried to be delivered from the "body of this death."

It is worth while to spend a little time on this point because it contains the gist of the whole matter after which we are journeying. St. Paul's problem expands upon investigation until it includes our whole question. If you are more than the expression of your body, your body is something much more than the expression of yourself; each of its myriad cells has its own life-history and behaviour; it is a community of which you are the head, and over which you rule so far as you can succeed in taking it into partnership with your higher purposes. But this success is never complete, because your body is not a ready made or mechanical instrument for your designs, and will revolt if you treat it as a private vehicle for your soul. It is the organ of your communication with the world, but it is much more than that. It is the link with which you are bound to the whole world's present and to its past, being what you are as the product of an infinitely complex series of past happenings. In it, and in your whole inherited mental apparatus of ideas and tendencies, memories of race and family—for you have a psychical as well as an animal and physical body—you are bound to the environment into which you are born, and to the history which has made it and you what you are. In your body and in your psychical and mental apparatus and equipment you are related to the whole world's past and to the outward order of its present, and you cannot move without carrying its mixed portion of

help and hindrance. In your spirit you reach out into the future and find yourself in communion with that which is more than all the past—half revealed and half denied in the past—an inward and ideal harmony which seeks to take the past up into itself, to fulfil and to redeem it. But into this too you cannot enter alone, or without taking the world with you. For ideal ends are nothing if they are not universal and all-embracing ; as soon as they are limited to the individual person or nation or interest they become worldly and lose their characteristic of spirituality.<sup>1</sup> Both ways you are bound to a whole which reaches infinitely beyond you behind and before ; you can find no solution of yourself, except in terms which embrace the world, whether the solution which you seek is a rational understanding or spiritual salvation. In you the whole world's past waits to be made into the whole world's future.

For us the world is no more a finished whole than we ourselves are finished wholes. We cannot in theory any more than in fact discover the equation between outward relations and inner meaning. The discovery is in the making. All we can do meanwhile is on the one hand to pursue knowledge of these relations, in order that we may understand the material with which we have to deal, and on the other hand to follow at their highest level the spiritual values which make for us the meaning of existence and of personality.

If both these processes are followed sincerely, they interact on one another and are mutually helpful ; but there is no final synthesis between them. The difficulties and conflicts which arise between them are the result of men being in too great a hurry to know everything or to master everything. Having gained some partial knowledge or intuition, some partial victory over

<sup>1</sup> This is not a contradiction of the emphasis laid in a previous section on the "particularity" of spiritual values. The world which you carry and that which you serve is not a bundle of generalities, but a whole of particulars. And it is in the particular that you must find and express ideal ends. But when the particular tries to become private, there is loss of that thing of which Christ said that from him that hath it not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

themselves or the world around them, they try to cram the whole of existence into a mould which will not contain it ; sincerity is sacrificed to what in the end is nothing but a form of laziness. To suppose that you can explain the world in terms of divine "purpose" is like the method of those religious preachers who think that they can redeem men from drunkenness by perpetual denunciation without taking the trouble to study the causes in the social body which produce drunken members of it. It is only at the end of the process that a synthesis is possible ; and we are not in the end but in the middle. What we have to do is to give both to faith and to knowledge their full values, and to keep them working together so that knowledge may purify faith and give it a reasonable content, based on the understanding of the material with which it has to deal, and that faith may inspire the search for knowledge, and prevent it from becoming self-satisfied or falling into the narrow rut of rationalism.

Faith must assume that the final meaning of all things is spiritual, but this assumption cannot be based on any demonstrable purpose to be found in the evolutionary process. The root of it is the inner feeling of being more than the mere product of a mechanical or quasi-mechanical past—of being free—and of being in communion with a spiritual reality in which partial experience is lifted out of its partiality and contradictoriness and gains a positive meaning and direction. So in history the spiritual appears not as a mere rearrangement or new combination of old elements (though it produces rearrangements and new combinations) ; rather it is the entry of something new which overflows over what was before and transforms it. The quality of spirituality is resident in the inward response to the call of ideal ends and values which are not contained in the past or in the present, but transcend it. The transcendent element is its leading note ; it is supernatural in the sense of receiving inspiration from something not

yet incorporate in those habits of the world which we call nature. But the supernatural is not separated from the natural by any fixed line. The line moves forward as the quality of intelligence and purpose incorporate in the world moves forward. The belief in the supernatural is the belief that the spiritual values which faith envisages as its ideal are also the forces which hold the world together ; that no limits can be set to the degree in which what we call nature is eventually capable of being moulded in response to them.

The supernatural is then not an alien order of existence which on occasion supersedes the natural and will one day succeed it ; but it is that which, being implicit (as faith believes) in the whole world's order, has not yet become explicit in its general history or in its behaviour, and so does not enter into the account of it which science can give. Wisdom in its early stages is intuitive and mystical, and is looked upon as supernatural until reflection and the exercise of reason become common, and its laws can be examined and formulated. But even so intuition and mystical apprehension expand with knowledge and are not exhausted by it, but point forward to further fields and to an end which, though more nearly envisaged, is never reached. Unthinking charity had a divine grace and was held to be the fulfilment of a divine command until benevolence became part of a reasoned social behaviour and was subjected to intelligent organisation ; but the exercise of a reasonable charity demands far more spiritual insight and love than the old easy ways of giving. The rule of kings was invested with a supernatural authority until the growth of education and of the moral freedom which it brings was far enough advanced for men to regard social and political institutions as the rational expression of common needs and aims. But rational ethics cannot create a community ; without a basis of higher spiritual endeavour they are always subject to the breaking through of selfish and irrational instincts. The disastrous results

of individualistic utilitarian morality in England and the horrors of state omnipotence in Germany are to us the clear and tragic proof of this. And even if he be virtuous the merely law-abiding person is a nonentity in the spiritual history and progress of the world. A belief in a machine-made or rationally contrived elysium will find few supporters to-day.

Nor would a merely law-abiding world be any less barren ; and a belief that spiritual ends are either the "natural" by-products of a world of dust and ashes, or an irrational excrescence upon such a world, or any other form of rationalistic determinism, has no real basis in reason. He who pursues truth sincerely is always called to hazard all his fixed beliefs in presence of a new fact. But it is the business of spirituality to bring new facts to light. It is not the increase of knowledge so much as the decay of faith and of spiritual adventure that has given colour to belief in mechanical materialism or in determinism ; it has been the experience of the slavery which has resulted from the pursuit of material ends at the cost of spiritual venture. A generation which has accepted and grown accustomed to the moral and material bondage of the great mass of men under the working of "economic laws," describing the inevitable results of human selfishness, could not be expected to have much insight into the world's spiritual possibilities. Spiritual advances are not made by the working of "natural laws," but through the response of men to the call of the spirit. Not the law-abiding person can make or mend the world, but he who is willing to risk the security which law and order give him to gain for the world a new treasure. "Sell what thou hast and give to the poor" is always the motto of faith ; and it is as true in the pursuit of knowledge as in any of the other adventures which go towards the making of a spiritual world. In faith adventure must precede understanding.

So it is through individual and particular adventure that new spiritual values gain entry into the world.

Afterwards the study of history may show how the world was ready to receive it, as in countless ways it was ready to receive the Christian Gospel. But the individual in whom it enters is not merely the product of the past. All the past is gathered in him, but there is also the possibility of a future in which the past is not merely continued, but fulfilled and transformed. Every individual has this contribution to make to the world's progress, a new thing which must be revealed in him before it can be woven into the general course of the world's behaviour. No one is merely a product of the past or an illustration of the laws of nature. We could see this if we could read history in its minute detail ; as it is, we can only see it in our friends and in the outstanding and notable examples of history.

Nor is the individual ever exhausted in that part of him which becomes the common property of his successors. The prophet attracts a school, and through it his work is continued and becomes in part incorporate in the beliefs and practices of men. But there is always something in the individual to which men return when the "-ism" which is called by his name grows cold and inadequate. It was necessary that he should become thus institutionalised, as it was necessary that Christ should become the foundation of that mass of custom and doctrine which men identify with the Church. But the founder is always more than the institution and than the theory which is built upon his work. To that "More" men must ever return—to the intellectual faith of Plato from the diverse opinions which pass as Platonism, to the life and person of Christ from the warring organisations which compete for His name. Through organisations and generalities His work flows back into the general body of social life. But it is never exhausted in this ; it finds its fulfilment in the individual inspiration and endeavour of His spiritual children, through whom it begets ever richer values in relation to changed circumstances and fuller



knowledge. Always the individual is more than the general, and through the individual the spirit enters more fully into its heritage.

It must be in human history that we first discern and pursue spiritual reality. But for faith, the vision of the Kingdom of God must embrace the whole of nature. It is that for which "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together" until the coming of the Christ. Faith will believe in what is called miracle; not as consequent upon a theory of divine power, but as holding that neither the knowledge nor the practice of men can exhaust the possibility of the particular. Miracle is not for it a "suspension of natural law," or the revelation of mysterious power by which nature is made to work backwards. The legendary miracles of mythology have this character; the Old Testament provides examples in plenty, and the New Testament is not empty of them. But for a faith which accepts the rationality of things, miracle cannot be that; it is the manifestation of something more in nature and in natural objects than is contained in our knowledge of them—their underlying spirituality and capacity for response to spiritual values. No scientific generalisation can disprove a particular possibility; but neither can any evidence or rational theory prove it. The test lies in the spiritual quality of the particular event. If Christ ever came to His disciples walking on the water, it was because love demanded it, and not in virtue of a mysterious power to command at will the physical forces of nature. Even if He did so, it would be nearer truth to disbelieve it than to believe it because of any reason than that of love. Even if He did not, it might be nearer truth to believe that He might have done so, because of love, than to disbelieve the possibility because of science. Had men the love of Christ, they would also know of His power.

The entry into the world of an individual possessed in a special degree by the Spirit of God may be attended

by unusual events of a kind "unknown to science." But if so, it must be the aim of a reasonable faith to make such events more usual and more intelligible. "More wonderful works than these shall ye do." The case we have quoted is of a kind which is still unknown to science, and handed down from an age when science was unknown. A more tractable instance is that of healing. As the importance of the influence of states of mind upon the body is recognised and better understood, psychical cures may become both common and scientific. Then the outward form of Christ's works of healing ceases to be miraculous in the sense of being beyond the reach of scientific generalisation. And in a sense "faith-healing" may be practised without faith. But such acts would not exhaust or contain the meaning of Christ's acts of healing. Machinery can multiply the outward form, but it cannot create or recreate the spiritual content. The important thing for Christ was not the bodily healing, but the spiritual healing and the faith which both made the bodily healing possible and gave it its saving grace. It is very good that psychical cures should be understood and practised intelligently; but the important thing for *faith*-healing remains the spiritual change—a new belief and confidence in the power and reality of the love of God—on which it lays its chief emphasis. The growth of knowledge and understanding does not replace love, but both demands and makes possible a purer and more spiritual faith in it; and it does not narrow but enlarges the sphere of its effective operation.

But the channel of love is the individual, and its manifestation is in particular acts. So faith rests itself upon a particular history. "Our fathers trusted in thee and thou didst deliver them" is the hymn of a national religion. Christianity looks back not upon a national, but upon an individual history, which, inasmuch as it is individual, is more than national, and can be freed from the limitations of time and circumstance.

It is true that Christ was born in the flesh, that He healed the sick and did signs and wonders, that He was crucified and rose from the dead, and that at Pentecost He revisited His disciples and transformed them from a company of expectant followers into the community that was and is to become a universal Church. These outward facts are the symbol of what is the power of the love of God over the whole of nature. But they are not in themselves a rational proof or demonstration of anything, because they are not themselves capable of demonstration. Historical enquiry and the criticism of the accounts which we have received of them can view them in relation to the beliefs and practices of their time, so far as these are known ; to the influence which belief in them has exercised upon the world's history ; and to the analogies presented by other creeds and other lives. But its chief work is to assist in releasing from what was merely temporary in all the beliefs and practices which men have built upon them that which is not yet contained in the whole history of Christianity, nor yet reducible to the terms of our knowledge—the Person whose presence is the ground of faith, the life which is a promise and a hope of things not yet wrought into the world's achievement. These things are not demonstrable to intelligence, though sure to the faith that accepts the values for which Christ lived and died. Intellectually it is less far from the truth to doubt or to reject the facts of the Creed, as beyond the range of approved truth, than it is to believe in their truth as fact while denying or distorting their spiritual meaning. If the devils also believe and tremble, they must (unless, as is probable, they are rather stupid) have more certain grounds than are open to us. The great mass of sincere doubt is mostly the revolt of intellectual morality against the spiritual infidelity of Christians.

But in the end love is not contained in logic ; rather logic will follow love. So faith which needs not to

patch up, but can see through the infidelities and failures of men, believes that the spirit of Christ yet holds the secret of the world, and can yet reproduce in the outward world as well as in the inner world of the believer's mind, the fact of Christ risen.

## V

At the close of this long argument we may shortly report progress on our main subject, though we shall not have much that is very definite to say until we have carried the enquiry to its next stage and tried to picture the will and power of God. All that we have done so far is to make a setting for the picture which we wish to draw. The subject on which we are embarked is a triangular one. At the base are the self and the outward world of our experience. In prayer as in all religion we seek an equation or harmony between them. But God is the apex of our triangle, and it is only in the spiritual values which we identify with God that the harmony is to be found. Our picture must derive its living content and its colour from the meaning which we give to the name of God. Until that is filled in it is only possible to draw a few preliminary lines. We can say something about the place which prayer must take in the whole, but nothing much about its direction or content or the response for which we may look.

The main purport of our analysis so far has been to set aside what we may call the quantitative view of prayer or any other kind of spiritual energy. Its effectiveness is not measurable in terms of quantity but of quality or value. It is not a method of producing outward effects or getting what you want done by setting in motion unseen forces or calling in an added power to enforce your will upon a reluctant world, however excellent your objects may be. It is the expression of a faith that what is highest in terms of

value is also most effective in the world—in a faith which by such expression tends to make actual that in which it believes. The attempt to think of spiritual efficacy in terms of outward relations of cause and effect will assuredly land you in the neighbourhood of magic or enchantment. You cannot at any point rationalise the relation of the outward and visible sign to the inward and spiritual grace. There are no spiritual dynamics.

Religion is the attempt to find self-realisation in terms of those things to which is attached universal and absolute value. The faith of religion is that the world contains the possibility of such realisation for every individual; that those who rightly pursue what is good in any form will never fail to find response to their desire and all things that are necessary to their well-being. Faith will believe this, but not vaguely as a general proposition or as an indefinitely optimistic hope, and it will not be satisfied short of actually finding in every particular thing and event and in all natural desires and emotions that which can turn them to good. Only in all things the response will be proportionate to the quality and not to the quantity of desire and effort. The call is always, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you."

This means that it is no use talking of the particulars of prayer until we have decided what the Kingdom of Heaven means. To discuss prayer simply as a means of making things happen, and to discuss it in terms of the things and their behaviour, is to confuse prayer with knowledge. Things are made to happen by the application of knowledge, physical, psychical or whatever is in point. It is true that there are things like the weather which our present knowledge does not enable us to control, and not only physical events but the events of history and of our own lives seem to march with a destined certainty that is beyond our reach. But we do not pray for things as a last resort

because we have no other means of controlling them. Indeed prayer is not the shelving but the acceptance of our *responsibility* for whatever happens. The object of prayer is that the best may always happen ; but its faith is that the best is within our reach ; and that in so far as we appropriate it (or yield ourselves to it, which is the same thing) we shall find the world responsive.

Prayer is thus concerned with ends rather than outward effects. But it is in the world's particulars that the most universal ends must find their fulfilment and expression. Therefore prayer is for the particular. But it deals with things in the spirit of the artist and the discoverer, and not that of the manufacturer. When you set out to manufacture a thing you have decided on the pattern and the material, and you have no further concern whether it is the best possible thing for your purpose or whether your purpose is a good one : you have decided all that beforehand. But when you have to paint a picture you cannot tell beforehand how it will turn out : you start with values which you want to express, and they clothe themselves, and maybe rearrange themselves, as you go on : and when you start with a piece of research, though you may have a theory beforehand which you hope to establish, your main purpose is not to prove your opinion right, but to discover truth. You must learn, if you are going to be of any use, to preserve a disinterested attitude towards your own conceits. So it is right that you should pray for a thing if you think it is good, but you must be not only content but pleased if you discover that your views about what is good have to be modified. You may want to spend money on a really desirable thing and then find that it has to go in taxes : to ask to be taxed is a new experience in English life ; but half the object of prayer is to learn to delight in the taxes of God. There are two parts in the pilgrimage after what is good : it aims at making

good the minute particulars which are its immediate concern ; but this is only possible in the larger setting of universal good, and with particular effort goes always the discovery of further ends. And it is the commonest experience that the larger good appears as the direct contradiction or inversion of the lesser. The first part of prayer is to give to the discoverer the faith and the capacity to penetrate beneath the outward showing of things which is the basis of all useful adventure.

So the path of prayer is that same one through death to life : through the death of particular desires for outward things or effects as such to the resetting and regaining of the particular in the whole of the Kingdom of God. It is the particular faith of prayer that things do come to life again, that nothing is lost but everything gained by the way of this death. In the world, if you want particularly to get a thing accomplished, you build a fence along the road of your purpose, erect signboards to warn off trespassing considerations, and select the vehicle with strongest horse-power to carry you to your destination. But in prayer the exact opposite happens : you melt the particularity or privacy of your desire in the contemplation of universal good, and are not surprised or weakened, but strengthened in purpose, if you often discover that the real answer is the exact inversion of that with which you started out. You achieve strength of purpose not by exclusive concentration on particular purposes, but by bringing all particular purposes into the crucible of the purpose of God's Kingdom.

In this process it is easy and common to get stranded in an intermediate stage which is that of "sentimentalism." Sentimentalism is the entertainment of moral affections without a real or reasoned belief in their applicability to the world, and so without feeling a necessity or duty to make them the immediate objects of will. The sentimentalist in practice either takes the world at its face

value and regretfully accepts the necessity of adopting its methods, which he would fain avoid, or else he tries to make it tolerable by decking it out in the garments of his own fancy, and looks at himself and it through stained-glass windows which colour the unpleasant places and so hide the necessity of regeneration within and without. Both these states of mind leave radical selfishness untouched. The sentimentalist finds his duties not so much in studying how he may contribute to the world's betterment and regeneration, as in the cultivation and diffusion of emotions. He deals in hope and good wishes, but glosses over the necessary conditions of their realisation in practice. He remains selfish at bottom, because, while he entertains moral emotions, he has not exercised his mind upon their particular applications, and has not allowed himself to become possessed by them. He allows them to colour his conduct as best they may.

Again, the ends which he pursues remain private ends, because even if he is busy in benevolent or missionary effort, he cannot really see any further good for others than that they should become like himself, or anything better for the world in general than that he should succeed in his projects. And when he has decided that, his methods tend naturally to become worldly and he is engrossed in his particular panaceas. To the sentimentalist, therefore, prayer will be mainly petition, the expression of desire and a way of getting things done—in fact a part of a particular system of dynamics. He will be busy in good works and in intercession for them, but his attitude to the deeper issues and struggles of the world will be largely passive. He will be content to leave such things to the Will of God, just as he is content in his own mind to entertain them as a general colouring to his thought and conduct. If he succeeds in his own ambitions, he will be full of gratitude; if he meets with disappointment, he will know how to allay its sting by the comfortable emotion of resignation and



self-abnegation. If he is pious—and piety in the sense defined above, p. 383 f., is, of course, a form of sentimentalism—he may be intensely active in the spread of his opinions: but in the matter of the deeper struggles of the world he will be inclined to the view that the chief part of man in the business is to combine religion and devotional practice with benevolent behaviour, and to leave the rest to God. The necessary discomforts of our present state can be tided over, and he will be something of an expert in palliative states of mind. In morality he will shun and denounce the cruder forms of sin and he will have and use a penitential code, but the subtler forms which radical evil assumes will hardly gain his attention.

Sentimentalism is a stage, and perhaps for most of us a necessary stage, in the development of religious faith and moral purpose. But it is one at which, as has been said, it is easy to become more or less fixed, and so to resign the struggle short of its crisis—easy for individuals, still easier and more than frequent for bodies of men, because a common sentiment is so much easier to compass than a common will, and so habitually masquerades as one. But the progress towards faith and purpose is one in which it is impossible to stand still without calamity. If you stay at sentimentalism, the world and the activities in which you have become engrossed rise up and swallow you. Sentimentalism becomes passive and obstructive towards real moral ends, fixed in its outlook, entangled in its machinery, a worshipper of its past. “Reaction” is sentimentalism grown middle-aged. And most especially in religion a busy and clamorous sentimentalism is always one of the greatest obstacles to spiritual achievement.

What is lacking to sentimentalism is the courage of its convictions and the faith to live dangerously in devotion to its ideals. At the back of its mind it does not believe in the real power of goodness to conquer the world, or in the certainty that if the sincere quest of

truth and goodness compel it to let go its own opinions and desires, it will really gain more than it has lost. It is not *faith* but particular beliefs which take hold of its subconscious mind and become its leading practical motives.

So in the end sentimentalism welcomes enchantment, but faith shuns it. That is why knowledge and sincerity in relation to truth are so important to faith. Faith believes that what moves the world everywhere is the goodness of God ; and its belief in the rationality of the world is a necessary part of its belief in its goodness. The search for knowledge and its application must therefore be the complement of its confidence in God ; and it is the instrument of the inward and outward recreation which faith seeks. But communion with God is the crown and the inspiration of the quest. Knowledge of the world's working cannot show it as good or as the unfolding of a single purpose. It shows regularity of working ; but in the realm of ends conflict and struggle and much apparent purposelessness. To faith God is that in which all good purposes meet and are fulfilled in the minute particular. The belief that all good purposes cohere is merely rational : but the faith that the whole world's order is based on good and permeated by it, and that good is the key to its meaning and potentialities—the faith in the indestructibility and invincibility of value—is religious and is the expression of faith in God. That is why prayer and not simply intellectual and moral endeavour is the natural and necessary mode of the activity of faith, and the mainspring of its life.

Faith cannot pray for inward grace apart from outward things, any more than it can seek a private salvation apart from the world, because it believes that good answers to good all the world over and that none is complete without the other. Its prayer is, as it were, the operation of God within going out to meet the operation of God in the world. It has no choice but to

“pray without ceasing.” But in its prayer for outward things the element of mere petition becomes subordinate to the affirmation that “all things work together for good to them that love God”: “For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.” Its answer is a repeated discovery of the truth of the strange saying of Christ, “Whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them.”

## PART II

### DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE AND MORAL FREEDOM

In what sense and with what meaning do we invoke the power of God when we pray that His will may be done and that our needs may be fulfilled? There is, as we have seen, no general formula by which we can relate the needs and desires of men to the potency of prayer for their fulfilment apart, on the one hand, from the quality of the end sought, and, on the other, from the quality of the power which is attributed to God.

The bare idea of omnipotence is one which can have little meaning until we have considered what is the character of that Will to which we attribute absolute power. A merely quantitative view of the power of God in the world will not help us at all if our argument hitherto has any force. Faith and will are qualitative and not quantitative concepts. Wherein, then, do we ground our faith in the power of God to accomplish all good? what is its relation to our own moral efforts and to the sense of freedom on which they are based? How may we picture the providence and power of God in relation to the world's order and to the evil and suffering that are so intricately woven into it? What is the nature of our present hope in the Kingdom of

God which Christ affirmed to be among us, and in the new life of freedom and fellowship which he said he came to inaugurate, and in the further spiritual renewal of all things to which his followers learnt from him to look forward?

On all these questions something, however meagre, must be said, if we are to give any life and colour to our presentment of the Christian faith in prayer. Clearly, on such large themes no studied argument will be possible; we can do no more than offer an annotated programme to a symphony.

## I

"Almighty and everlasting God," we say in our common prayers, "who dost govern all things both in heaven and earth"; "whose never-failing providence ordereth all things"; "who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men"; and in words which have become familiar in these latter days, "King of kings, Governor of all things, whose power no creature is able to resist." What is the assumption that runs through these ascriptions of almighty power, the assumptions which underlie all our petitions for the outward ordering of circumstances? This is the first question which we must ask.

The assumption of the power of God to perform all things, so that whatever He wills must immediately happen and be declared in the outward order of events, is one that needs very careful examination. To the elementary religious consciousness of a Monotheism awake to the opposition between the self and the inflexible order of outward things, the relation of God's power to the world appears as might, as a force external to the self and its desires. What impresses men is its magnitude and its irresistibility. They may have inner assurance of the friendliness—under certain conditions—of this power, and of the righteousness

and kindness of its ultimate intentions, but when they look outward upon the world it is the simile of the potter and the clay that has established itself most deeply in their minds.

So Jewish and Christian religious thought has been dominated by a view of omnipotence which interprets it as the power of God to impose His will upon all the circumstances of the world, an external power which the irresistible forces of nature and of circumstance obey and reveal. The laws of nature are God's immutable decrees and the events of history His commands. Even the wicked in this philosophy are compelled to serve His purposes ; for the evil wrought by one is turned to the punishment of another ; he may think that he is pursuing his own ends, but in reality he is but the blind instrument of divine justice, to be used until his own turn has come when he shall be overthrown and his designs brought to naught. Though the innocent seem to suffer, it is that he may be the more greatly rewarded ; and though the wicked seem to prosper, it is that when he has served the divine purpose, he may fall into a greater destruction. "Then understood I the end of these men ; namely how thou dost set them in slippery places, and castest them down and destroyest them. O how suddenly do they consume, perish and come to a fearful end !"

Under this divine autocracy obedience is, of course, the one thing needful on the part of man. The rule of God is above all things righteous, and it follows that righteousness is the first part of obedience. But in the troubled course of the world's history the hand of God's just direction is sometimes hard to trace. It seems that His ways are inscrutable and His standards incommensurable with ours. His commands seem to be by no means exhausted nor his favours merited by simple pursuit of the good and rejection of the evil. It becomes clear that the divine standard of righteousness is not only higher than any attainable by His

servants, but also incomprehensible to them. The gap is filled by ritual observances and ceremonial duties, which have their origin in man's need for particular expression of his sense of joyful yet dangerous intimacy with the inscrutable divine. In this system, where divine command and man's obedience are the ruling ideas, ritual is necessarily clothed with all the majesty of law; and where divine morality is found to be incommensurate with man's, ritual obedience becomes more tangible than moral obedience, and as a condition of acceptable prayer more definite and clear. In all religion the legal force which is attached to ritual and ceremonial observance owes its power over the mind of men to the moral uncertainty of the divine rule; and upon this moral uncertainty the religious abuses and the misuse of religious authority which go by the name of priestcraft have always thriven. Not that the machinery of religious ritual was, as the eighteenth-century rationalists used to maintain, invented and sustained by the priesthood for its own benefit; but that men have tried to find comfort and a sense of security in obedience to commands more clear and definite than the commands of morality could be under this system of inscrutable divine autocracy.

True morality implies the possession and the exercise by man of real freedom. In the type of theology which we are considering, man alone of all earthly creatures is supposed to possess this gift of freedom; but when the nature of the gift is examined, and when the attempt is made to reconcile it with the absolutism of the divine rule, it becomes difficult to see in it much more than a device to shift from God to man the responsibility for the manifold evils of the world. It is indeed made rather the expression of man's inalienable sense of guilt than the spring of moral adventure and discovery, which true freedom must be. In truth, freedom is a thing to be afraid of in this gloomy creed. Men have not unnaturally sought to return so dangerous

a gift together with its responsibility to its donor. They have asked not for help to adventure, but for clear and definite rules in order that by obedience they might merit a security and safety from the perpetual risk, which freedom brings, of incurring the awful jealousy of God. Men have always asked that they might be servants rather than citizens in the Kingdom of God, and religious authority has seldom refused the temptation to comply with their request.

Indeed the belief in the autocracy of God is necessarily destructive of moral judgment. The moral judgments of the religious conscience are necessarily accompanied by a sense of awe. But when awe is turned, even in a slight degree, to fear, man must needs seek escape from the responsibility of moral judgment altogether. In the old legend it was said that the desire of Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was the origin of human misery. In truth men have seldom been slow to welcome an excuse for rejecting the divine impulse to search for truth and knowledge; and have preferred the status of children who are bidden to obey without cause shown. So they have insisted most upon the conservation of that element in religion which answers to this desire and, in return for ceremonial obedience and for the acceptance of a negative moral code, is ready to relieve them of their deeper conscience.

Of course no genuine religion has ever been simply a logical carrying out of this theory. Whatever theoretic picture men have made for themselves of the might and majesty of God, it has always been true that God is love. From communion with a love which they have not understood men have learnt the beauty of holiness and the strength and joy of trust in a God whom they knew intuitively to be different from the being whom they theoretically worshipped. Wherefore, as the writer to the Hebrews says, God was not ashamed to be called their God. Nor have

there ever been wanting prophets to awaken the deeper conscience which this tradition must needs tend to suppress. But despotism remains fundamentally immoral, even though it be benevolent. And this assumption, while it has never been able to destroy personal communion or to prevent the advance of the spirit, has perpetually weakened men's power, in prayer and in act, of understanding and of fulfilling the purposes of God in the world. Trust won in communion has given them hope and confidence for the future; inability to reconcile divine morality with divine omnipotence has led them into moral agnosticism and a false resignation to the present. Or they have consented to adapt their own moral standards to their theoretic view of God, and ecclesiastical morality has only too often been behind the level of the better contemporary standards, and inclined, as a benevolent despotism always is, to do evil that good may come.

In the Old Testament this despotic notion of God's omnipotence runs as an alien and barbarous current through the literature of love and trust. In Christianity it is melted away in the absoluteness of God's love. But men have never been able to venture themselves sufficiently in love to realise its omnipotence; and Christian theology, while it has dwelt on the love of God manifested in redemption, has never been able to free itself from the notion of compulsive power in its thought of God's creation and direction of the world.

In general men's thought of God has varied with their political and social institutions—naturally, seeing that both are mirrors of the morality of the community. In the days of absolutism and divine right the claims of divine imperialism reached their highest, and the morality of the government of the Church its lowest level; and the Roman claim to temporal power remains as a monument of the most destructive force in Christendom. Latterly in the days of constitutionalism



and political organisation, men have attributed to God rather a presidential capacity. And it is common to speak of Him as having of His bounty abdicated the full power which is His right in favour of voluntarism and democratic control. There has been much talk of the self-limitation of God, as of one who is content to give general directions and to set limits for the good conduct of the world, and to intervene only in cases of urgent necessity, when men have too far overstepped the bounds. But this is clearly too unstable a position to be maintained against the outward determinism of science and of economic and political history; and men's belief in God's providential control of the order of events has tended to settle down into a vague optimism in regard to their general direction. The God who thundered out of Sinai becomes, in Mr. Balfour's phrase, "the glue that holds the world together"; and people bravely hope that it is a good glue.

## II

There are two ways in which it is possible to exercise power or to think of it. If you want any one to do anything, you may so order external circumstances that they impose upon him a physical or psychological impulse to do or to think as you desire. It may be anything from a feather-weight in the balance to a practical necessity. The methods you adopt may be anything from crude violence to the subtler methods of suggestion and influence. Your motive may be selfish or benevolent; it matters not; the important thing is that your purpose and the means you adopt to bring it about are external to him. And in the end power in this sense means ability in the last resort to enforce your will against his. The other method is to entrust yourself and your purpose to him, to give yourself away to him as it were; your first aim is not that he may be induced to do a particular thing, but that what

is good and true in you may unite with what is good and true in him to produce the best possible result for him. You trust to his response and to his knowledge of your confidence in him that so far as you have anything to do with it he may both desire what is good and have strength to perform it.

The power exercised by men over one another is of course always or nearly always a mixture of these two methods; and the line of demarcation between them is not always easy to draw. Men are external to one another, and in their imperfect communications motive and method do not always agree. Nor can they escape from the necessity of a measure of compulsion as long as anti-social sin arouses the need for social self-preservation. You must at least catch your criminal before you can convert him. But the necessity to use methods of compulsion is always to some extent a judgment on the user as well as on those whose failure to respond to a purely moral appeal occasions their use. And the progress of social and political morality is the gradual substitution of a conscious fellowship for the arm of the law as the moving force in society, though at present we have in politics hardly advanced beyond the partial replacement of the authoritarian by the rhetorician, who is his democratic equivalent.

The history of the growth of spirituality in religion is the gradual disappearance of the belief that God exercises power of the external and compulsive kind, and the realisation of the omnipotence of divine love to attain its ends without the exercise of compulsion. Love is the only form in which it is possible to figure an omnipotence which is both absolute and moral, for wherever compulsion is present the highest moral result is incompletely achieved. This becomes evident if we ask, What is the end of a rational morality? It is communal righteousness or justice. But this can only exist in perfection in a society in which every one enjoys his "rights," *i.e.* in which every individual not merely

respects the personality of every other but values the full and free development of personality in others as much as in his own case—in other words, in which each one “loves his neighbour as himself.” Thus justice means behaving to people as if you loved them. Outward behaviour may be enforced; but it has no spiritual value or efficacy unless it is free. So justice can only be realised as the product of love. Love cannot be a command; you cannot love to order; it is a gift. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.” The basis of a spiritual morality is freedom, and the morality of freedom is love. Without love there may be outward behaviour; but there can never be the inner satisfaction and fulfilment of every individual within the whole. Such satisfaction is possible only to the lover. He has no need to be busy and anxious in reshaping things outwardly to his own taste because he knows of a more effective way and is out on a more profitable quest. Everything has value for him simply because it is what it is, and not as the material out of which he can manufacture a suitable temple for his soul.

If we say that love alone is the author and sustainer of all things that exist, we mean that whatever exists exists not by God's decree but by His Self-giving. Not of the Christ only but of all things in their degree it is true that they are “neither made nor created but begotten.” When we say that God is immanent in His world we must mean that nothing in the world is simply the expression of an external will, but that all things possess what they are from God, but in and for themselves. What they may become is hid in God, and is always more than their outward showing; but their becoming is their appropriation in increasing measure of God's free gift. There is no external circumstance which the grace of God given to the creature cannot turn to good.

So the love of God is omnipotent, not as controlling

and shaping the outward course of events. Love is omnipotent because it can always in any circumstances give a perfect expression of itself. It has no need to manipulate history, because it is always sufficient to meet any situation. The activity of love is self-giving; it can afford to give itself away, and no reception which it may meet can be either a limitation or a real defeat.<sup>1</sup> If divine love is the author of all existence, it follows that nothing can exist wherein love cannot find expression.

So omnipotence and freedom are complementary to one another. The freedom of the creature is not a limitation of the omnipotence of God but its expression: omnipotence is not a limitation of freedom but its ground. In terms of outward relationships this is a paradox for which there is no rational solution. But love is more than rationality; not contrary to it—indeed it is its ground—but over and above it. The freedom of the creature can no more be stated as an external relation to outward things than can the omnipotence of God. Freedom is not *in the first place* the power to choose between possible lines of action. If you were perfectly free—free from ignorance and self-will—you would never have to choose. To complete knowledge and complete spiritual insight there would never be more than one course of action open. There can never be more than one best, and there always is a best. Freedom means capacity to do what is good without external let or hindrance; capacity that is to express in your outward action the full value and meaning of your inner self. Christ on the Cross was free not because he had chosen that death of all others for himself—he had prayed with agony that it might not be,—but because no doom to which men could condemn him could alter or diminish the fulness of his love nor hinder its full expression.

<sup>1</sup> A German imperialist writer thus states the principles of German rule in Africa—"Africa for the Africans, but the Africans for us." But the principle of divine rule is rather—"The world for God, but God for the world," though of course we should write the principle of our worship the other way round.

The first condition of such inward freedom is not the power to mould outward circumstances but an acquiescence in the order of circumstances, whereby the soul is set free to pursue ideal ends without fear or anxiety as to consequences. But such acquiescence may have different shades. You may regard the world as a necessary evil and set out to "build a Heaven in Hell's despair" as cynics and ascetics have done. Or you may with the gentler stoics find a more positive joy in resignation to the inevitable and learn to return thanks for the escape from self which contemplation of the endless impersonal cycle of nature gives. But neither stoicism nor asceticism is final freedom. You may reject the world or resign yourself to it, but if stone walls and iron bars cannot make a prison, they certainly cannot make freedom. Freedom in its full sense demands not only an inward harmony and capacity to rise above circumstances, but a reciprocity between the self and the outer world of nature and society, so that all things may be found to work together for good. When Christ said that he was come to make men free, he was not offering an escape from circumstances or an inward mastery in their despite. There is no melting away of the individual into the serenity of an impassive whole. "One of these little ones" is ever all worth in the Kingdom of God. The freedom which he promises is not merely a freedom from the world as sin has bound it, but a freedom of the world as God inhabits it—the freedom of the lilies of the field.

The only basis of this is love, because love alone can have infinite care for the individual in the whole. The order of the world is for Christ neither the vain show which asceticism and puritanism have tended to make it, nor the operation of a necessity to be accepted with resignation, but simply the grammar of the love of God manifested in the minute particulars of His creation.

God appears and God is light  
To those poor souls who dwell in night,  
But does a human form display  
To those who dwell in realms of day.

God is light because He is love. And because He is love there is no place in His world where He will not be found responsive to the needs of the individual, and nothing in it which need simply be cast off, nothing which is an imprisonment or merely a temporary "discipline." Because there is evil in the world the way of freedom may be the way of the Cross. But behind it is the Resurrection, and for the Christian this is not merely a distant hope, but a living presence. If I die daily, I can also daily rise again.

### III

It will not be necessary to say very much about the order of nature and of history. Order is not a limitation but a condition of freedom: and so it is not a limitation but an expression of love or omnipotence. There is only one kind of outward order, and that is rationality. An ordered world is simply one in which cause and effect follow in rational or logical sequence.

Rationality is inherent in God, but it is without meaning to speak of Him as the creator of the world's order; or as having decided that twice two should be four and not five. So equally it is without meaning to speak of Him as having decided that there should be an earthquake or war at a particular place or time, in the sense that He might have prevented it. But this is implied in the language which speaks of the Omnipotence of God as an external controlling power. "With God everything is possible": but in God there are no unrealised possibilities. To say that God might have created a different world or might have altered the course of history means either that there

are limiting conditions external to God, as there are with us when we exercise choice, or that He might have made two and two equal to five.

That can only mean that He might have been an irrational being and created an irrational world. It is not valuable or interesting to speculate on what God might have done, because it is without meaning. If God is omnipotent, it is clearly inconceivable that He should have done anything other than He does. For it is absurd to suppose that, when He might have willed the best, He deliberately willed the second best instead, or that He might have willed anything but the best. God is Love. To say that He is omnipotent is not to give Him an added attribute, it is equivalent to saying that love is omnipotent.

Neither the Omnipotence of God is limited by the rationality of the world's order, nor the freedom of man. Man, too, is rational: and in knowledge is given to him one way to that union of the "within" with the "without" which is freedom. If knowledge is regarded in the first place as a mastery over the world, and used by man to impose his will upon it, then indeed the world will become a prison. So in our days the growth of scientific knowledge and of machinery, and the great development of organisation in all branches of social life, have been used to make the world a prison for many. But that has been the result not of knowledge itself but of blindness to spiritual values, not of wisdom but of folly, not of a sincere search for moral freedom but of the assertion of overmastering desire.

Men have made a prison of the whole order of the world because they have tried to tame the world to their desire. They have not sought inner understanding but outward possession. They have not disciplined themselves to the service of truth, but have looked for such half truth as could minister to their ambitions. The fetters of knowledge abused

are inevitably stronger than those of ignorance. Under its oppression men have cried out against the hardness and determinism of the world's order. And where they have vaguely preserved the belief that beneath the physical and psychic determinism was a spiritual reality, they have tended to regard the outward order as an ossification of the spiritual, hard and intractable save to mechanical manipulation. Similarly those who have attributed to God the despotic mastery which they have claimed for their own opinions have tended to regard the order of the world as a petrification of God's will—graven as the Ten Commandments on imperishable stone. But to true and disinterested knowledge as it advances this picture of an ossified world vanishes as the stones which Moses engraved have vanished. Wisdom, which is knowledge combined with insight into values, seeks not mastery but freedom, not control but union. Its own desires are relative to what is good, and it sees its own constructions of the world as partial approximations, whose real meaning is relative to the whole in which all is contained. The logical necessities of reason are no limitation to its freedom because its freedom is the service of love and truth. Its ground and inspiration is not ambition, but worship, the bringing of all gifts into the actively receptive contemplation of the love which alone can perfect them.

The only necessity or determinism destructive to freedom and the fulfilment of spiritual ends is that created by sin. It is a truth which the deeper conscience of men has always recognised, that the attainment of outward freedom—of real mastery over events—is subordinate to and dependent upon the pursuit of moral freedom—of service to moral ends. Where self-will is put uppermost in thought or practice freedom is forfeited.

In Greek and Hebrew literature, the cradles of the deeper thought of the West, this principle is funda-



mental. The Greeks thought first of the community, and their basic moral concept was justice. Only in a community where justice reigned could freedom be realised. The type of sin was the preference of individual power to justice, or any self-assertive act or emotion which overstepped the right proportions of social order. Justice was freedom, injustice begat the necessity of its own undoing. A man could suffer injustice and continue to be free : he could not commit it without surrendering himself and his to a necessity of sin : once admitted, sin worked itself out mechanically from generation to generation until the destruction was accomplished of those who had given themselves into its power. The inevitability of this destructive power of sin was the basis of their earlier drama ; it gave dramatic intensity to their contemporary historians ; and it deeply occupied the greatest of their philosophers.

The same idea in a very different form runs through the Old Testament. It was in the will of God that sin became its own avenger. From God went the lying spirit to encourage the delusion of Ahab's prophets. And from God was raised up the godless power of Assyria against the sinning Jews. The reward of sin is death, but the instrument of punishment is a yet greater sin. (There is danger in thinking of oneself as the instrument of Divine chastisement.) To the Jews as well as to the Greeks the real vindication of the moral order of the world was the inevitableness of the ruin wrought by the disregard of it. And the most important thing about freedom was that he who abused it lost it and fell under a necessity of sin.

It is indeed a commonplace that the great criminals of history, starting on ambition and desire for power, have come to feel themselves instruments of forces which they could not control, have spoken no longer of their purpose but of their destiny. Such language is too familiar to us to-day. And it is no less true of those who pursue more commonplace lines of selfishness

and are content with a measure of worldly success which will enable them to live their days in peace and plenty. While they are wound in the machinery which will finally discharge them to a lot of tedious respectability, social ills mount up mechanically till conflicts and disasters which they have not willed, but which their lack of moral will has caused, rise up and threaten the whole structure which they have built. Sin is passive as much as active, and he who refuses moral adventure is marked out for inevitable degeneracy; he breeds corruption to which he is blind until it breaks through his crust of worldly comfort and involves him in a wider ruin. Blindness is always the first-fruit of successful selfishness, and it is infectious.

This determinism of sin, the necessity that, apart from some redemptive power which is greater than necessity, sin should breed sin to the destruction of the race, is inherent in any moral view of the world. And it is fundamental to Christianity. If Love is the source of life and freedom it is impossible both to entertain that which is contrary to love and to continue in freedom or in life. It is not the part of a religious faith to answer riddles or to know *how* evil entered into the world. We know that it is so far rooted in it that the degeneracy, the "parasitism," and the ignoble forms of warfare which mar human society have their full biological equivalents in nature: and those who have talked easily of a consistently or automatically progressive evolution have many knots to cut. We cannot tell how many of the malignant forms in nature are the reflex of man's sin, and how far man's sin is the heritage of pre-human crooked tendencies, deriving their origin we know not whence. What is more important than speculation as to the origin of sin is the knowledge that the love which we believe to be the source of all creation is available for present redemption, and for the restoration of the freedom which sin has destroyed. If we are born children of many sins we

are also born into a greater love. And love is the solvent of necessity because it can enter into and bear in itself the consequences of sin, and so prevent the necessity of their working themselves out in destruction.

Those who give themselves to divine love give themselves also to suffering, because suffering is the direct and inevitable consequence of evil. There is no short-cut from the consequences of evil; nor is suffering in itself good or automatically remedial: what is remedial is the grace of God to men to turn their suffering from the dull pain of a necessary consequence and a cause of further ill into an accepted channel of redemptive love. And the characteristic expression of love is joy; it must sometimes suffer, but its sufferings are gladly borne.

Religion has contributed much to immorality by speaking of suffering and calamity as a judgment imposed by God upon sin. God does not impose the consequences of evil, He takes them into Himself and suffers them; and pain into which He enters ceases to be miserable. Nor is the world "miserable," as we call it in our Prayer Book, because in love the joy is always greater than the pain, and it is not palliative but recreative. What is important is to trace the world's ills to their true sources. One of the besetting sins of religion is a wilful ignorance; and when religious people think of pain and suffering or calamity of any kind as the judgment of God, they are apt to excuse themselves from the real pain of searching into the deeper causes of evil; they connect disproportionate calamities with irrelevant sins, and contribute to the very ignorance and indifference which more than anything hinders their removal.

The judgment of God is not a consequence imposed by His will either within or without the natural and rational sequence of events. It is the revelation of Himself as love. The love of God is to the individual either the solvent for all fear or else a thing which is terrible.

You must either give yourself to it or else seek suicide in order to escape from it, for there is no other way. The power of love is that you cannot remain indifferent to it. You must either hate it or hate yourself in so far as you have not loved. It was impossible for the Scribes and Pharisees to be indifferent to Christ or to tolerate or patronise him. They must either surrender to him or else seek his destruction. But to seek the death of love is to seek your own death; for it is to cut yourself off from the ground of your being. In the end there is no choice but between repentance and suicide. Love alone is immortal; whether sin can bring a final death we cannot tell. But until then there is room for redemption and recreation: there can be no immortality of evil.

What, then, shall we say of God's providence? It consists neither in direction nor in foreknowledge of the outward course of events. Both of these we need because we are within circumstances. God needs them not because all circumstances are in God. His providence and His power in history is the grace—that is the power of love both in suffering and in rejoicing—given to man to make and mend his own history, and his own world. His knowledge is not the external knowledge of circumstances, but the obscure intuition of the reality of the world as contained in love, and of every individual as His child. When Christ said that his disciples were to take no thought for the morrow, he was exhorting them to have faith answering to the knowledge of God, which needs to take no thought for the morrow because it sees that all eventualities are provided for; and God's providence and God's knowledge are not limitations but conditions of human freedom. To be known of God is not to be marked for an outward destiny, but to have both spiritual purpose and the means of fulfilling it. And to know that the world is contained in the providence of God is not to know that every minutest occurrence

has been mapped out in detail in advance, but to know that every contingency in your outward relations is provided for and can be turned to good.

#### IV

Creation and Incarnation, Redemption and Judgment—these great expressions of God's relation to the world—have intellectual and moral meaning just in so far as they are understood as variations on the one theme of the love of God, and the power and the wisdom which are contained in it, the presence and the promise of the Kingdom of Heaven. So long as it was thought that Creation was complete and fixed, this Kingdom too was conceived to be a New Jerusalem coming down from heaven complete and adorned as a bride—the finished climax of a catastrophic judgment and re-creation. But to us has been opened out the vision of a gradual growth and advance towards a spiritual goal. The love of God is complete and absolute, but the building of the kingdom is a gradual process of evolution and growing apocalypse. Official and corporate religion has refused to become consciously evolutionary, and so it had almost ceased to be relevantly apocalyptic. Men have spoken of progressive revelation and progressive creation, but as though we were set in a God-driven train rolling with fixed speed towards a destined end, and as though our part were limited to being of good behaviour on the way. But the doctrine of the Incarnation means that to man himself is entrusted the work of creation as well as the never-failing opportunity to repair what he has made amiss. The Kingdom of God which is within us is the permanent possibility of an evolution and progress which is straightforward, not losing itself in by-ways or returning back upon itself, where advance is not always balanced by degeneration.

The first emphasis of the faith in God's love is on

the potentiality and value of the individual, and on the grace given to each to make good his part in the common work. The incarnation of the divine in the one man Jesus is its indispensable foundation. But the end of the individual is in the community, and not only is the individual the channel of the Spirit whereby the community is built, but the Spirit of the community, which is more than the individual, goes to his making and redemption, and is needed to call forth his fullest powers.

Therefore Jesus looked forward to the fulfilment of his work in a society which should be something more than the continued association of the disciples who had gathered round him; and it was the spiritual advent of Christ at Pentecost which made of the company of disciples the spirit of fellowship which went out to conquer the Roman world—the Christ whom St. Paul knew, not in the flesh as the prophet of Nazareth, but more intimately and more wholly as the author of a universal brotherhood of the sons of God.

For as freedom in the individual is, as St. Paul said, “of grace,” explicable and attainable only as the gift of transcendent love, so is the community of spirit and of purpose, which is both the basis and the goal of society. All history is the story of man’s search for freedom, and the measure of the growth of freedom is the growth of the spirit of community or fellowship. For freedom is found in service, and in the discovery of an authority to which he may freely give himself, which can take and bring to perfection all his gifts.

The natural community—family, nation, society—is always aiming at becoming such an authority, but can never attain it. The laws which it makes and the government which it obeys are the expression of man’s consciousness, not merely of the necessity of order to freedom, but of the authority of the ideal of a community of will and interest beyond anything

yet achieved. But government cannot *make* this community: it can only register and work out in terms of social order the degree to which men have attained it; its purpose is to clear the highway of moral freedom of the obstructions with which sin has strown it, to regulate the common activities of men, and by education to ensure as far as possible that each man's gifts are developed in the spirit of free service. Education is the great positive instrument of government; and the symptom of the quality of government will always be the importance which it attaches to education and the quality of the education which it seeks to give. But the authority which inspires both government and the obedience and co-operation of the citizen is religious. In our days the religious character of the State has been lost; and the situation is impossible until it be regained, and its true ground discovered in the fellowship of a common worship and the recognition of a common gift.

It was as revealing and bringing to men this divine gift of fellowship in the ideal made present in the spirit that the work of Christ was final and absolute. He came not immediately to reveal or to inspire an intellectual system of belief, not to establish or ordain a system of organisation or a code of social or ecclesiastical polity, not to expound or to erect a code of social or individual conduct. But he came to manifest and make possible a new spiritual relationship between man and God and so between man and man. And the gift of the Spirit which he promised was that men might go from a full experience to its progressive expression, from spiritual union to organic union, from faith to knowledge.

It is this experience of the present possibility of the perfect fellowship of the Christian community, in spite of the imperfection of its members, which is the unique thing in the New Testament writings, and it was that which opened the eyes of men to see the irresistible

attraction of Jesus of Nazareth, and enabled them to believe that he was indeed risen from the dead. But to-day we seem to be at the climax of a long history of its failure, and we must needs ask why.

When the Church first came into being, it was as something consciously foreign and external to the existing political and social order. Men believed that that order was soon to pass away; they could remain content in its anomalies—even in the relation of master and slave which was the symbol of all that Christ came to destroy—because they were to be so short-lived as not to be worth troubling about. So they laid no store by the world's order and by earthly life; and the spiritual strength of the other-worldliness of Christianity won its victory over the world order of the Roman Empire. But when its early expectation was not fulfilled the Church had to take an attitude of something other than mere opposition to the order of the world. What happened was that it accepted the patronage and the methods of a great material power, and inherited from it an ideal of power and of authority which was imperial and not religious. The strength and inspiration of Christ have always been spiritual and have never failed. But the Christian society became worldly in its methods and in its ambitions, and has shared the fate of every worldly empire. And it has failed most disastrously in the very thing which it was its special mission to bring to the regeneration and progress of human society.

The Western Church inherited the three great things which ancient civilisation had brought to birth but could not bring to fulfilment. The religious and moral structure of Israel, the intellectual gifts of Greece, and the great political order of Rome were hers to redeem from the decay into which they were falling, and to bring to the fruition of a free development had she remained true to the spiritual faith of her early experience.



But in so far as the Church accepted the dream of worldly domination, the peculiar spiritual power of her early days left her and she has never recovered it. As a society the Church has claimed to possess the Spirit, *as of right*, and in that very claim has limited and denied it, and has inverted the true order, making the outward manifestation the condition instead of the symbol of the divine grace.

So the Church has preferred outward order to the fellowship of the Spirit, because you can impose an order but must serve a spirit. She has feared the freedom of the Spirit because the Spirit is creative and cannot be confined within the limits of past expression and past order. And she has resisted rather than inspired the spiritual achievements of mankind. In conduct she has taught men to prefer obedience to moral freedom, in knowledge to prefer dogma to truth, and in social order to reverence the authority of the past rather than that of the future.

So the Church has gone the way of human society, following rather than leading, sharing in and adding to the obstinate resistance which the inertia of the past always offers to the freedom of the future. She has inspired wars as much as peace, strife as much as fellowship, prejudice as much as sincerity, passion as much as judgment, tenacity of privilege and property as much as reverence for personality and service to the spiritual community.

The historical record of the Divine Society is that of a very human corporation; but its faults and its selfishness have been aggravated by the fact that in religion men can always add to their own self-assurance the claim of divine right and inspiration. In our days the dream of an imperial catholicity has long been shattered by the growth of national and international liberty and democracy. Its heritage is the moral anarchy which in human society answers to the religious anarchy of sectarian christendom. The social and

political history of modern Europe is a tragic judgment on the interpretation which the Church has given to the moral and spiritual authority of a common membership in Christ, and on the interpretation which by reaction men have given to the liberty and freedom which the Church denied.

Yet the personal and individual fascination and authority of Christ has never failed, and certainly is not failing to-day. While the Church has sought to confine the freedom of the Spirit, there have never failed individuals and small societies who have given themselves to the leading of the Spirit of Christ and have felt the power of his grace. The true history of the Church has been the history of its individual saints and of the communities which have risen to redeem the sins and failures of the greater society. Upon their work has been built the measure of freedom and of fellowship which has won its way against the world's ambition. And the faith which inspired them has been preserved, in spite of all the authoritative ideal of a Church holy, catholic and undivided.

The Church has lived in its individuals and in its sacraments. The regenerative power of admission into the Fellowship of Christ, and the experience and assurance that his grace of Self-giving can make all things new, not only in the individual life but in the whole order of society and of the world,—these things have never completely failed, because Christ has never failed. But because the outward sign has been emphasised at the expense of the inward grace these very things have become the chief occasions of exclusiveness and of division; their true simplicity has been buried under a mass of formal controversy, and the promise that they contained of the spiritual recreation of the world has been lost and forgotten. They have been made a privileged and private gateway of individual access to the Head of the Church: but have

never become the effectual symbols of the spirituality of all creation seen and mediated in the Fellowship of the members of the Body of Christ, nor the symbols of a new world to be made of the simple and divine acts of giving and receiving and mutual dedication, simply because that Fellowship has never been there to see. Christ came that the mysteries of the world might be revealed in the light of his sacrifice and resurrection : the Church has made of it and him a mystery. But mystery has not won or redeemed the world, and never will. The only real mystery is the failure of the Christian society to be Christian.

The catholicity of the Church was broken because it was not catholic enough, because it sought to impose a catholicity of order rather than to minister a catholicity of spirit, and its sacraments have lost their meaning because it was not sacramental enough and has not believed in the spirituality of the world or in the Fellowship of the Spirit. The communion of the saints has been regarded as that of a company with very limited liability and unlimited privilege. The result has been that until the more recent past the chief spiritual and evangelical movements both within and without the organised Church have been individualistic, and the moving force in them has been the individual salvation or freedom from worldly bonds found in personal relationship with Christ. No one can doubt that the wide and largely unseen working of individual Christianity has been the great steadying and unifying force beneath the surface of the social fabric. But there is something in the very strength of an individualist religion which detracts from its social force and from its social faith. Individual life on earth is so short, so clearly fragmentary and imperfect an expression of that divine sonship which men feel within them, that its whole emphasis tends to be upon a future consummation after death. Men lose the sense of the immanence of the Kingdom of God as a re-creation of earthly life, and are easily resigned to a

view of the world and of society as permanently marred and corrupted by selfishness. Their efforts for the well-being of men become palliative rather than redemptive in relation to the social order ; their mission is to gather men into the fold which will secure them future compensation for the ills they have endured, and to make them good with the promise of a reward beyond the grave. Such a religion loses its faith in the spirituality of the world and of human society, grows resigned to worldly methods, to conventional moralities, and narrow in its interpretation of Christ. It becomes blind to the subtler forms of corporate sin, and, above all, to the inherent selfishness and worldliness of its own corporate life and organisation. So the Church, divided between the competitive individualism of Protestantism and the tenacity of Catholicism to a false imperialism, had ceased to practise a living fellowship and therefore also to preach a social gospel—had lost the one great gift that was given it for the world's redemption.

But while the Church slept the Spirit of Christ had not slept ; the slow movements for the spiritual enfranchisement of men which had grown out of Christianity but which the Church had not been able to receive had been gathering force. Because of the blindness of the Church to her true vocation they had grown up largely in direct antagonism to established religion, they had flung themselves upon the hard walls which traditional Christianity had built round its social conscience, and had fallen back in bitterness and resentment, and sought to work themselves out in terms of material and political conflict. But there were always many who saw their intrinsically spiritual character and gave themselves for the sweetening of the bitter waters. So beneath the gathering violence of social and political disaster there has grown up an increasing number of those who have grown conscious of the power and the possibility of spiritual fellowship, and who have learnt more and more to see their work and their ideals prefigured in the

teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. But experience has taught them that his Church is not the place where they were likely to find sympathy or understanding. The characteristic of our age has been that the very same reasons have driven many to turn from the Church and others to cling to it. There exists a vast body of diffused Christianity in individuals and in groups, outside as well as within the organised Church, giving themselves, as the Church at large has never learnt to do, for the ideals of social freedom and fellowship, that is for the social manifestation of Christ which is the very meaning of the Church.

For if Christianity is anything more than an instrument of individual redemption, if the great and inspired language which the Church has always used about itself has any meaning, it is just this, that in the spiritual fellowship of Christ men are raised above the limitations of inherited divisions and the barriers of social and individual selfishness, that whatever gifts or visions they had apart are magnified and transfigured in the strength of a spiritual community—where they were blind they see, where they stepped feebly in the weakness of lonely groping they walk strongly in the light of common adventure. This was the experience of the early Christians when they woke to the splendour of a new ideal made real for them and possible for the world, and it has always been the experience of men confronted with a common danger; the Church has reversed the experience: the instinct for permanence has largely swallowed up the spirit of adventure; and because it has had no active social ideal, it has in its complacency been blind to the danger that it should cease to be the living channel of the Spirit of Christ. For it is for a social and not merely for an individual gospel that men are looking to-day. Their best ideals and aspirations are social and they know too well that their sins and failures are not their own concern alone.

This gospel the Church alone can give, but it must

be a Church reborn in the Spirit. One thing is necessary—that Christians should turn and see one another, not as in the confusion of their past traditions, but in the light of the Love of God, in the spiritual presence of Christ. For men in Christ it is possible to see one another as God sees them, not as cogs in a machine or as instruments of production, not as members of a class or nation, not as cases of a disease, examples of a vice or error, or as illustrations of a prejudice, but as sons and members of a family, each one with gifts to bring, a place to fill, a value of his own which no other can replace, in the community. It matters that Christians should learn again to love one another and should seek one another in the presence of a common love. There is light in such seeking because there is in it a necessary sincerity, and sincerity is what the Church has lost—sincerity of faith in the spiritual power and in the holiness of Christ. If the members of the broken sects of the Church will come together, not to discuss how they may patch up differences, regulate machinery, organise campaigns, enforce morality and belief upon an indifferent world, but to look behind all these things for a wider vision and a stronger faith than any they have nursed in their separate and dark enclosures, if they will go out to men of goodwill in the world not to complain or to instruct, if they will not be so anxious to remove the misapprehensions of others as their own—there can be born again a force which can inspire men, not singly here and there or in small separate companies but in masses and in great armies, to give themselves for a new faith and a new world. But it must be first on the initiative of individuals and small groups and companies of men, determined to hazard themselves on love alone, that the new Church must be built.

What is needed first is not a call to the sentimental penitence of dust and ashes, but a vision of a possible ideal in the light of which repentance or change of

mind will be possible, not complaint and grief but a hope and faith which can make sorrow useful because it can turn it from weakness into strength. If the Gospel of Christ is true, if he taught nothing that he did not also render possible, such strength and vision is attainable simply through the coming together of those who have been content to work in separation and in contention. In these days we are inclined to cry (and to wait) for leaders. It is not leaders that are wanted but the spirit which will make men scattered through the world to hear again the unmistakable leadership of Christ and to feel his power. Leaders there will be when there is the spirit that can create leaders and to which leaders can appeal. For we desire not those who come of themselves, but those who are born of the awakened consciousness of God's people.

Out of nothing less than the simple and humble practice of Christian charity—a faith in the spiritual value of men as they are—a new Church may be born, which will be able to disentangle itself from the confusion of its partial and conflicting traditions, from the toils of its complicated machinery and its foreign language, and from the deep corruption of its organisation by the political and social abuses of the world. It will be built not without labour and tears because charity is very urgent and requires that men should be ready to divest themselves of all they have held dear, and to hazard all they have of separate comfort and security. In religion, as in all spiritual matters, security is only found in adventure, and the preservation of what you possess only in putting it out freely at a venture. It is a false interpretation of the stewardship of spiritual things which treats of them as securities held in trust which must not be risked ; and, above all, this is true of the Christian traditions, because without the risk which charity inspires they lose what truth they had. But the faith which is gained in fellowship can afford to risk these things because it knows that what is of value

in them will be not only restored but reset in the proportions of a truer and more splendid whole.

Not without pain and not in a day can be accomplished this rebuilding, for it can be nothing less than the building up of all spiritual faith that is scattered through the world. But the spirit that can move men to it, and the faith that can accomplish it, is attainable whenever men who have striven in bitterness and separation, or in distrust and indifference, come together to find anew their membership in Christ. As Christians seek and find this spirit, Christianity will again become a thing which men in their dealings with one another, as classes, parties and nations, will be unable to regard with indifference. It will be able to judge of the world and its own past because it will have the power of redeeming them. The Church—or “the Churches”—will no longer stand as discordant and ineffectual policemen striving to direct in different ways the world's traffic. It will be the magnet which can bring together into the daylight of a common faith and work those who laboured in separation and lonely and darkened ways towards a light whereof men separately see but fitful gleams. It will be able to inspire industry because it will no longer look at men as instruments of production but will regard it as the chief end that every one should develop his best gifts. It will be able to inspire leisure and recreation because it will give men the gift of joy in one another and in God's world, instead of the hectic excitement by which they seek to escape from the dreariness which they have made. It will again be able to inspire art because it will have discovered the secret of the art of life. And, instead of confounding, it will be able to inspire knowledge and the search for truth, because it will have gained the sincerity which is the ground of intellectual faith. Instead of being the greatest obstacle, it will be the great inspirer of a true education, because it will know again how to see in a little child the semblance of the Kingdom of God.



The spiritual advent of Christ into the world to judge and to renew it is neither a catastrophe in the clouds or the predetermined end of an indefinite period of necessary pain and sin. It is timeless. Our vision is of a consummation towards which we move. But there is no fixed or measured speed. And the whole process of the world is an answer to his promise of return. Through the centuries he has come to men singly and in companies, sometimes in answer to great need suddenly and with catastrophic force, sometimes gradually and imperceptibly lightening a heavy life. He has shown men to themselves, and he will surely show them to one another. Swift and sudden with the clear brightness of lightning in the night may be that visitation, not, indeed, without anguish, but spreading the radiance of new life and faith over the death agonies of age-long infidelities ; or it may appear a slow dawn palely struggling through the clouds and tempests of our hate. As men sincerely seek to know one another in him, he will show them.

And when men have learnt again to see the spiritual nature of God's children, they will see the spiritual nature of His world. They will cease to defile it and one another with it, forcing it to subserve the purposes of disease and death. Their usage of it will be a part of the worship which nature pays to the beauty and strength of God. And what is corrupt in it knowledge and love will learn to conquer.

Corruption and the form of death we know remain as long as men believe their necessity, and set their hearts upon the things which cause them. Christian faith does not believe that "natural" evil is a hallucination any more than it believes that sin is a hallucination. But neither does it believe in the *necessity* of any form of evil. The prevalence of vice and disease and the misery of death, are not these the symptoms of our failure to realise its social meaning ?

The Resurrection of Christ and the common life

given to the disciples at Pentecost—are they isolated examples of arbitrary power, or are they signs of what the potentiality of divine love always is where men give themselves to be its channel?

### CONCLUSION

To pray is to seek entry into the Kingdom of God. To seek this is not merely to entertain a vague and distant ideal, still less to wait upon an appointed destiny. The Kingdom of God within means the presence of a growing structure into which every minute particular of the world can be wrought.

Through the spirit of man his own past and the world's passes and repasses to become the future. Christ saw the semblance of the Kingdom of Heaven in a little child, because in the wonder of childhood is gathered all that is divine in the heritage of the past as yet unbound by the world's enslavement. Wordsworth wrote of the gradual imprisonment of this free spirit and the darkening of its light, Plato of a gradual recollection and fulfilment of heavenly desires. Wordsworth spoke of middle-aged experience, Plato of faith made good in mental fight. It was left to a type of Protestant Christianity to work out the idea that salvation was dependent on the expulsion of childlike faith and fancy; Catholic Christianity was content with the idea that in this world childishness is the permanent condition of mankind, and has tried to make of the world a well-regulated nursery.

Neither of these two latter theories of education has worked entirely well; but they have largely made us what we are. Plato's is the better basis for prayer.

"There is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man." From without comes the impact of the past and of the

world's environment. To refuse mental fight is to let these things pass out as they come in, to add to the evil without the evil of sloth within. But behind the turmoil of the spirit which these things occasion is the divine love in which all that is evil can be melted in the passion of the mind. Only love can do this, and worship is the only possible attitude to love; prayer is the expansion of worship into the particular.

In the spirit of the individual must be found that which, passing outwards, makes the spirit of the community, and makes the interchange between the individual and the community free and full. But it must be found not in the vague illumination of a distant vision but in the thought and desire for good in minute particulars. There is something in all the natural and genuine desires which come upon an individual that can find true and joyful fulfilment in the desire of the world towards God which is the instrument of His love in creation.

The Love of God is particular, and you cannot worship it without the offering up to it of your particular desires. And to each He will give its fulfilment, suffering what in it is evil, and laughing away what is foolish. The laughter of God is deeper and stronger than His tears. Until men see that, their tears are without laughter, and their laughter is without tears, hard and empty of healing power.

Prayer will not let the impact of outward things rebound from the surface of the mind (which is their reflection), but holds them in contact with its divine source, and keeps them there until the self's reaction is not merely free from pollution but quickened with recreative love and life. In it is the awakening to the real strength and joy of true individuality—an ever-sufficient measure of gifts received in solitude, but to find their fulfilment in the throng of common life, being rendered again in the divine fellowship of the sorrow which can heal, the knowledge to build true,

and the joy which is all the varied music of the world. It is a mental strife unending and never finished, and full of fluctuations; but it is life-giving because its background is the patience of God: the patience of God is without fear of failure unretrieved, and in His company though one sin there is always another who can bear and stay the hurt.

To discover the true joy and strength of individuality is also to discover the responsibility of the individual for whatever happens, and for all that men do. The world's behaviour is of one piece, and the behaviour of the drunkard outside your door is a part of your behaviour. In the Kingdom of God the knowledge of this responsibility is joy, because though full of shame it is without fear, and a discovery of potentialities unrealised. To those who feel not the responsibility for helpless vice and innocent suffering, the sight of both is intolerable. Many blind themselves in order to escape it. But those who feel the responsibility see also somehow the sustaining arms of God.

In friendship and comradeship, in work and in affection, the nature of this responsibility is revealed, because its strength and joy is seen to be dependent upon the respect and reverence for what each man is and not on what you may think he ought to be. The prayer of friendship is free from the anxiety and fuss of the desire to manage every one else's business; it is a conflict in which the enemy is the illusion that the world would be better if every one in it conformed to your pattern. To pray for a friend is to seek that you may know him, and that he may know himself in God; it is a seeking to detach and make operative in him and in you his individual immortality.

God must appear to us in human form. But the world will never become Christian until Christians cease to picture God to themselves as one single individual, standing as an overseer above His toiling

servants. The symbol of the Trinity should warn us off this error. Rather there is to be seen in Him, as it were, an infinite multiplicity of individuals, answering to each according to his need of friendship—whether forgiveness or comfort, encouragement or such wrestling as Jacob had,—but one in the love that can bind all men together, the pain of Christ whereby all are made new, and the wisdom wherein the outward showing of things may be bound together in various but unbroken harmony. A large part of prayer for others is to remove from our spiritual associations the worldly divinities of the drill-sergeant, of property in spiritual things, and of the competitive trafficker in souls, and to replace them by a sacramental comradeship in divine things.

To move about the world without prayer is to miss the sight of that divine and recreative spirit which its ugliness and sin conceal but cannot quench. To pursue one's ends without prayer is to do so empty of creative resource. To pass men by without it, or to greet or remember them without it, is not to know them. It is in the particulars of his work and conversation that man makes or mars his part in the Kingdom of God ; how, then, shall he not pray for them ?

But prayer is not a substitute or an addition to the machinery of the world's forces ; is no more useful than it was in the days of Ahab for men to cut themselves with knives in the fury of desire. Nor yet is it a passive supplication that our ends may be accomplished "if God wills." Its purpose is that man may know what God wills and, if dreams are shattered, may find among the ruins some greater good. The secret of prayer is less in the attainment of ends desired than in the discovery in the wreck of desires unfulfilled of some flaw in the design, some truer version that may rise above the world's obduracy ; or else some way of turning pain to active and remedial patience of outward

evil. The Love of God is infinitely inventive. Resignation to evil is faithless ; conflict and open strife may be actively unselfish, and beneath it runs the thread of God's patience. But the patience that endures actively in love is alone divine.

In prayer for outward things the will is adjusted and strengthened, and the Kingdom of God turned from a dream into a living purpose to be worked out in the wide companionship of men ; it receives the quality of perceptive and creative imagination. But it is more than that. Its ground is the knowledge that in the world, too, at the end of purpose, as well as in the mind that purposes, the Spirit of God stands answering to the spirit of your prayer. You may see no stretched-out arm turning the traffic of the world to this side or that ; no outward sign, but everywhere love answers to love, and shapes albeit invisibly the course of things.

The secret was an open one to Christ, and was manifested in his works. To those who have come to him since, he has shown it, and has illuminated and empowered their lives, and through them he has secretly leavened the world. To the individual the light and the power of Christ will come in sufficient measure for his needs, for action and for endurance. But in the individual or group they are still fitful and partial while they are hidden and distorted and weakened by the larger negations of the world and the mutual denials of Christians in the world and towards the world. Beneath all these things Christ remains full of rewards and full of promises. But the larger promises to the individual still wait upon the community, and the larger needs of the world wait upon the willingness of men, individually and in their broken communities, to admit the need and the possibility of something beyond their partial readings of Christ and their inherited traditions. When Christians look less to the satisfaction which they have obtained, and more to the good things in the world which they have not achieved, to

the glory of God which is the world's corporate potentiality, they must in their loneliness and in their divisions begin to feel the need of one another even more than others need of themselves. Only then can the vision again become an open one and the power manifest as it was when Jesus walked upon the earth.

XIII  
THE DEVIL

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## XIII

### THE DEVIL

“FROM the crafts and assaults of the Devil, good Lord, deliver us.” So we pray; and the prayer certainly answers our need. We feel ourselves surrounded by powers of evil, from which we want to be defended, and the desire expresses itself in the form of a petition for help against the Devil. But most people who have responded to the prayer must have asked themselves how much more than this they meant; whether they believed in a Devil at all, and if so what they imagined him to be like. There is no doubt that common belief has long been tending more and more to discard the idea of a Devil; and yet the idea is orthodox. Does this mean that modern thought is drifting away from orthodox Christianity? Is the disbelief in a Devil only part of that vague optimism, that disinclination to believe in anything evil, that blind conviction of the stability of its own virtue and the perfection of its own civilisation, which seems at times to be the chief vice of the modern world?

In part this is so. And a world rudely awakened once more to the conviction that evil is real may come again to believe in a Devil. But if it returns to the same belief which it has gradually been relinquishing, the step will be retrograde. For that belief was neither fully orthodox nor fully true. Orthodox Christianity believes in a Devil who is, as it were, the bad child in

God's family ; the "Devil" in whom people of to-day are coming to disbelieve owes much if not all of his character to the Manichæan fiction of an evil power over against God and struggling with Him for the dominion over man's soul. It may seem surprising that popular thought should confuse Manichæism with orthodoxy ; and it certainly is surprising that theologians should so seldom come forward to correct the mistake. But it is hard for the uninstructed to follow technical theology, and it is perhaps equally hard for the theologian to follow the obscure workings of the uninstructed mind.

It is clear then that the vital question is not, Does the Devil exist? but rather, What conception have we of the Devil? Unless we first answer this question it will not be certain whether the spirit into whose existence we are enquiring is the orthodox or Manichæan or indeed any other devil. Further, it is important to determine in what sense we believe in him. A man may, for instance, believe in Our Lord in the sense of believing what history tells us about Him, but yet not believe in Him, in the sense of not believing in His spiritual presence in the Church. So one might believe in the Devil in the sense that one accepts the story of Lucifer as historical ; or in the sense that one believes in Lucifer as an evil force now present in the world ; and so forth.

This way of proceeding may be called the critical method ; and it is this which will be adopted in the present essay. But much popular thought on the subject is of a different kind. It concerns itself immediately with the question, Does the Devil exist? without first asking these other questions ; and the method it adopts is "scientific" in the popular sense of the word, that is, inductive. It proceeds by searching for "evidence" of the Devil's existence ; and this evidence is nowadays drawn chiefly from psychology. As the eighteenth century found the evidences of religion chiefly in the world of nature, so the present

generation tends to seek them in the mind of man; but the argument is in each case of the same kind.

This psychological argument plays such an important part in popular thought that we must begin by reviewing it; otherwise every step in our criticism will be impeded by the protest that an ounce of fact is worth a ton of theory, and that, however we may theorise, there are facts, positive facts, which prove the existence of the Devil.

Let us then begin by considering these facts; not *in extenso*, for they would fill many volumes and could only be collected by much labour, but in a few typical instances, in order to see what kind of conclusion they yield. The evidence is no doubt cumulative, like all evidence; but a sample will show in what direction, if any, the accumulation tends.

The two most striking groups of evidence may be described as obsessions and visions. By "obsession" I mean not the morbid phenomena of demoniacal possession, or the "*idée fixe*" of mania, but the sense of the merging of one's own personality in a greater and more powerful self, the feeling that one is overwhelmed and carried away not by impulses within but by the resistless force of another will. This feeling is extremely common in all religious experience. The saint feels himself passive in the hands of God. "This is a trait" (says Höffding, *Philosophy of Religion*, § 28) "very frequently found in mystics and pietists; the more they retain (or believe themselves to retain) their powers of thought and will, the more they tend to attribute to their inmost experiences a divine origin." Höffding's parenthesis looks almost like a suggestion that the feeling only occurs in persons whose will is really in process of decay. But if the suggestion is intended, it is quite indefensible. The weak man, like Shakespeare's Henry VI., may have this feeling; but St. Paul had it even more strongly, and he was certainly not a weak man.

This feeling of obsession by a divine power is in fact only an extreme form of the sensation, which everybody knows, that we are surrounded by spiritual forces which by suggestion or other means influence our wills for good. And the same feeling, both in its rudimentary and extreme forms, exists with regard to evil forces. Children come quite naturally to believe in good and bad angels which draw them in different directions ; and this belief may pass through all stages of intensity until we think of our own personality, not as a free will balancing and choosing between suggestions presented to it by angels of light and darkness, but as shrunk to a vanishing-point, the moment of impact between two gigantic and opposed forces. Man becomes the merely sentient battlefield of God and Satan.

The case which immediately concerns us is that of the soul overwhelmed by a spirit of evil ; and this is equally familiar to psychology. As the saint represents himself the passive instrument of God, so the sinner feels that he is the passive instrument of the Devil. The saint says with St. Paul : " I live, and yet not I but Christ liveth in me." The sinner replies, from the same source : " It is no more I that do it, but Sin that dwelleth in me."

Here, then, is the first group of evidence for the existence of the Devil ; and we must try to determine what it is worth. It will be noticed that the same type of experience serves as evidence in one case for the existence of the Devil, and in the other for the existence of God. We believe in the Devil (it is suggested) because we immediately experience his power over our hearts ; and we believe in God for the same kind of reason. But psychology itself, which collects for us the evidence, warns us against this uncritical use of it. It may be that the whole feeling is a morbid and unhealthy one ; or it may be that in one case it is natural and healthy, and in the other unnatural and

morbid. Psychology can describe the feelings which people actually do have ; but it cannot tell us whether the feelings are good or bad, trustworthy or misleading, sanity or mania. Telepathy, self-hypnotism, sub-conscious cerebration, force of education or environment—these and a thousand other explanations are from time to time adopted ; and each is, within the limits of psychology, possible, none certain. In point of fact, the psychologist takes whichever view for the moment suits him as a working hypothesis, but the supposed explanation is never more than this, and is generally much less. So the really vital point in the argument is a gap which can only be bridged by the gossamers of flimsiest speculation.

The second group of evidence appears at first sight more conclusive. The visions of God, of Our Lord, of angels and of saints which are found in all types of Christianity (and similar visions seem to occur in all other religions) are parallel to visions, no less authentic, of fiends and demons and of the Devil himself.<sup>1</sup> These sensational forms of religious experience often seem to carry special weight as evidence of the reality of spirits other than our own ; but here too the whole argument turns on their interpretation. Are they, in the language of popular philosophy, “subjective” or “objective” ?

In order to answer this question, an attempt is sometimes made to analyse them with a view to discovering what they owe to tradition, to the education or surroundings of the person who sees them. Thus it is found that a vision of the Devil is accompanied by

<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to encumber the text with instances of such familiar experiences ; but I should like to refer here, since it has only appeared in a review, to the case of a Roman Catholic priest, described in a series of his own letters in the *British Review*, vol. i. No. 2 (April 1913), pp. 71-95. “On one occasion, when I had retired for the night, a being appeared who addressed me using the most vile language and rehearsing for me in a terrible manner many incidents in my past life. . . . I jumped up and ran at it, making a large Cross in the air, when the figure melted away like smoke, leaving a smell as if a gun had been discharged. . . . When it reappeared I began to recite sentences of the exorcism, and it seemed to me that when I came to the more forcible portions of it the voice grew less distinct. As I proceeded and also made use of holy water the voice died away in a sort of moan. . . . The voice claimed to be that of Lucifer.”

a smell of brimstone, and that one's patron saint appears in the clothes which he wears in the window of one's parish church. But these details prove exactly what the interpreter chooses to make them prove. To the simple, they are corroborative; they prove that the apparition is genuine. To the subtler critic they are suspicious; they suggest that the alleged vision is a merely "subjective" reproduction of traditional images. But the critic is at least no better off than the simple believer. For if my patron saint wishes to appear to me, why should he not choose to appear in a form in which I can recognise him? And if I see the Devil and smell brimstone, may not the coincidence with tradition be due to the fact that when the Devil appears he really does smell of brimstone?

Thus the discussion as to the subjective or objective nature of these visions is involved in an endless obscurity, and whatever answer is given depends on a private interpretation of the facts, which is at once challenged by the opponent. Psychology can collect accounts of visions; but to decide whether they are real or illusory is outside its power. Such a decision can only be reached in the light of critical principles which psychology itself cannot establish. There is nothing in a vision itself, and therefore there is nothing in a thousand visions, to guarantee its truth or falsity; and therefore the uncritical use of such things as evidences is no more than a delusion.

There is, however, a second and less crude method of using psychological data. How, it is asked, do we account for the existence of all the world's evil? We are conscious in ourselves of solicitations and temptations to sin; and even if we are not in these temptations directly conscious of the personal presence of a tempter, we cannot account for their existence except by assuming that he is real. We do not, according to this argument, claim direct personal knowledge of the Devil, but we argue to his reality from the facts of life.

There must be a Devil, because there is so much evil in the world. We know that our own sins make others sin, and it seems only reasonable to suppose that our sins may in turn be due to an Arch-Sinner, whose primal sin propagates itself in the wills of those who come under his malign influence.

Everything, we believe, must have a cause ; and in assigning it to its cause we have, so far as we can ever hope to do so, explained it. A thing whose cause we have not discovered is, we say, unexplained, and one which has no cause is inexplicable ; but we refuse to believe that anything is in the long run inexplicable. Evil then—so we argue—must have a cause ; and the cause of evil in me can only be some other evil outside myself. And therefore we postulate a Devil as the First Cause of all evil, just as we postulate a God as the First Cause of all good.

But the parallel here suggested is entirely misleading. God and the Devil are not twin hypotheses which stand or fall together. God, as present to the religious mind, is not a hypothesis at all ; He is not a far-fetched explanation of phenomena. He is about our path and about our bed ; we do not search the world for traces of His passing by, or render His existence more probable by scientific inductions. Philosophy may demand a proof of His existence, as it may demand a proof of the existence of this paper, of the philosopher's friends or of the philosopher himself ; but the kind of certainty which the religious mind has of God is of the same kind as that which we have of ourselves and of other people, and not in any way similar to the gradually strengthening belief in a hypothesis. The two kinds of belief must not be confused. I do not consider the existence of another mind like my own as a highly probable explanation of the voice I hear in conversation with a friend ; to describe my belief in such terms would be entirely to misrepresent its real nature. The Devil may be a hypothesis, but God is not ; and if we



find reason for rejecting the above argument for the reality of the Devil we have not thereby thrown any doubt on the reality of God.

The belief in a Devil is supposed to be a hypothesis. But is it a good hypothesis? Does it explain the facts?

There are two questions to which we may require an answer. First, how do I come to think of this sin as a possible thing to do? Secondly, why do I desire to do it? To the first question the hypothesis does supply an answer: but no answer is really needed. My own faculties are sufficient, without any diabolical instruction, to discover that on a given occasion I might do wrong if I would.

To the second and much more important question the hypothesis of a Devil supplies no answer at all; and to conceal this deficiency it raises two other questions, each equally hard, and each in point of fact only a new form of the original problem. If evil can only be explained by postulating a Devil, in the first place, what explains the sins of the Devil himself? Secondly, granted that there is a Devil, why do people do what he wants them to do? The first of these questions is not answered by saying that the Devil's sin is a First Cause and needs no explanation; that is, that it was the uncaused act of a free being. The same is obviously true of our own actions; and it was only because this account of them seemed insufficient that we felt compelled to postulate a Devil. But if it is insufficient in our case, how can we guarantee its sufficiency in his?

The other question is even more unanswerable. If the Devil, by some compulsive power, forces us to act in certain ways, then these acts are not our acts, and therefore not our sins; and if he only induces us to act, the question is, why do we let ourselves be induced? If there is a Devil who wants me to do something wrong, his desire is impotent until I choose to fall in with it. And therefore his existence does nothing

whatever to explain my sin. The hypothesis of a Devil explains nothing; and if the fact which it is meant to explain, the fact of evil, requires an explanation, then the Devil himself requires an explanation of the same kind.

The truth is that evil neither requires nor admits any explanation whatever. To the question, "Why do people do wrong?" the only answer is, "Because they choose to." To a mind obsessed by the idea of causation, the idea that everything must be explained by something else, this answer seems inadequate. But action is precisely that which is not caused; the will of a person acting determines itself and is not determined by anything outside itself. Causation has doubtless its proper sphere. In certain studies it may be true, or true enough for scientific purposes, to describe one event as entirely due to another. But if the Law of Causation is a good servant, it is a bad master. It cannot be applied to the activity of the will without explicitly falsifying the whole nature of that activity. An act of the will is its own cause and its own explanation; to seek its explanation in something else is to treat it not as an act but as a mechanical event. It is hardly surprising that such a quest should end in a confusion greater than that in which it began. Evil, like every other activity of free beings, has its source and its explanation within itself alone. It neither need nor can be explained by the invocation of a fictitious entity such as the Devil.

In the absence of any results from the method of evidence and hypothesis, we must turn to the only other alternative, the simpler though perhaps more difficult method described above as the method of criticism. Instead of asking whether or not the Devil exists, we must ask what we understand by the Devil, and whether that conception is itself a possible and reasonable one. When we have answered these

questions we shall perhaps find that the other has answered itself.

To this critical procedure it may be objected at the outset that the method is illegitimate; for it implies the claim to conceive things which in their very nature are inconceivable. Infinite good and infinite evil are, it is said, beyond the grasp of our finite minds; we cannot conceive God, and therefore neither can we conceive the Devil. To limit infinity within the circle of a definition is necessarily to falsify it; any attempt at conception can only lead to misconception.

Even if this objection were justified, instead of being based on a false theory of knowledge, it would not really affect our question. If the Devil is inconceivable, then we have no conception of him, or only a false one; and there is an end of the matter. But any one who maintains his existence does claim to have a conception of him; he uses the word Devil and presumably means something by it. The objection, if used on behalf of a believer in the Devil, would be no more than a confession that he attaches no meaning to the word and therefore does not believe in a Devil at all. So far as he does believe, his belief is a conception and can therefore be criticised.

Now the idea of God as an omnipotent and entirely good being is certainly conceivable. It is possible to imagine a person who possessed all the power in existence, who could do everything there was to be done, and who did everything well. Whether this conception can be so easily reconciled with others, we do not ask; we are only examining the idea itself. Further, it is an essential element in the conception of God that He should be not perfectly good alone, but also the sole and absolute source of goodness; that He should will not only good but all the good there is. Now it is essential to grasp the fact that whether such a will as this is conceivable or not depends on whether good things are all compatible with one another, or whether

one good thing may exclude, contradict, or compete with another good thing. If they are all compatible, if the "Law of Contradiction," that no truth can contradict another truth, applies *mutatis mutandis* to the sphere of morality, then all individual good things are parts of one harmonious scheme of good which might be the aim of a single perfectly good will. If, on the other hand, one good thing is incompatible with another, it follows that they are not parts of a single whole, but essentially in conflict with one another, and that therefore the same will cannot include, that is cannot choose, all at once. For instance, granted that A and B cannot both have a thing, if it is right that A should have it and also right that B should have it, God cannot will all that is good ; for one mind can only choose one of two contradictory things.

It seems to be a necessary axiom of ethics that on any given occasion there can only be one duty. For duty means that which a man ought to do ; and it cannot conceivably be a duty to do something impossible.<sup>1</sup> Therefore if I have two duties at the same time, it must be possible for me to do both. They cannot contradict one another, for then one would be impossible and therefore not obligatory. There can be a "conflict of duties" only in the sense that from two different points of view each of two incompatible things seems to be my duty ; the conflict disappears when I determine which point of view ought to be for the moment supreme. This does not mean that there is a greater duty which overrides the less ; for the distinction between doing and not doing, and between "ought to do" and "ought not to do," is not a question of degree. The one is simply my duty, and the other not my duty. No doubt the latter might have been my duty in a different situation ; and it is often distressing to see what good things we might have done

<sup>1</sup> It is sometimes perhaps a duty to *try* to do an impossible thing. But in that case the claims of duty are satisfied by the attempt ; and to attempt the impossible is not necessarily itself impossible.

if the situation, created perhaps by our own or another's folly, had not demanded something else. But here again there are not two duties; there is one and only one, together with the knowledge that in other conditions some other duty would have taken its place.

If it is true that my duty can never contradict itself, it is equally true that my duty cannot contradict any one else's. A may feel it his duty to promote a cause which B feels it right to resist; but clearly in this case one must be mistaken. Their countries may be at war, and they may be called upon by the voice of duty to fight each other; but one country—perhaps both—must be in the wrong. It is possibly a duty to fight for one's country in a wrongful cause; but if that is so it is one's duty not to win but to atone in some degree for the national sin by one's own death.

A real duty, and therefore a real good, is a good not for this or that man, but for the whole world. If it is good, morally good, that A should have a thing, it is good for B that A should have it. Thus all moral goods are compatible, and they are therefore capable of being all simultaneously willed by a single mind. So far, then, the idea of God seems to be a consistent and conceivable notion. Is the same true of the idea of the Devil?

The Devil is generally regarded as being not only entirely bad, but the cause of all evil: the absolute evil will, as God is the absolute good will. But a very little reflexion shows that this is impossible. Good cannot contradict good, just as truth cannot contradict truth; but two errors may conflict, and so may two crimes. Two good men can only quarrel in so far as their goodness is fragmentary and incomplete; but there is no security that two absolutely bad men would agree. The reverse is true; they can only agree so far as they set a limit to their badness, and each undertakes not to thwart and cheat the other. Every really good thing in the world harmonises with every other; but

evil is at variance not only with good but with other evils. If two thieves quarrel over their plunder, a wrong is done whichever gets it, but no one Devil can will both these wrongs. The idea of a Devil as a person who wills all actual and possible evil, then, contradicts itself, and no amount of psychological evidence or mythological explanation can make it a conceivable idea.

Our first notion of the Devil must be given up. But we might modify it by suggesting that the Devil does not will that either thief should get the plunder; he desires not our success in evil projects, but simply our badness. He incites the two to fight out of pure malice, not with any constructive purpose but simply in order to make mischief. That one thief should succeed prevents the other thief from succeeding; but there is nothing in the mere badness of the one incompatible with the mere badness of the other. And the badness of each is quite sufficiently shown in the attempt, whether successful or not, to defraud the other.

This brings us to a different conception of the Devil as a person who does, not all the evil there is, but all the evil he can. He is an opportunist; when thieves can do most harm by agreeing, he leads them to agree; when by quarrelling, he incites them to quarrel. He may not be omnipotent in evil; whatever evil he brings about is at the expense of other possible ills; but at least he is consistently wicked and never does anything good. Is this second idea more conceivable than the first? In order to answer this question we must enquire briefly into the character and conditions of the evil will.

There are two well-established and popular accounts of evil, neither of which is entirely satisfactory. Sometimes evil is said to be the mere negation of good; nothing positive, but rather a deficiency of that which alone is positive, namely goodness; more commonly

good and evil are represented as different and opposed forces.

The first view contains elements of real truth, and is supported by such great names as that of Augustine, who was led, in his reaction from Manichaeism, to adopt it as expressing the distinctively Christian attitude towards evil.

This view is generally criticised by pointing out that as evil is the negation of good, so good is the negation of evil ; either is positive in itself but negative in relation to the other. This criticism is valid as against the verbal expression of the theory, though it does not touch the inner meaning which the theory aims at expressing. But unless this inner meaning is thought out and developed with much more care than is generally the case, the view of evil as merely negative expresses nothing but a superficial optimism, implying that any activity is good if only there is enough of it, that only small and trivial things can be bad, and (in extreme forms of the theory) that evil is only evil from a limited and human point of view, whereas to a fuller and more comprehensive view it would be non-existent. These sophistical conclusions are so plainly untenable that they force the mind to take refuge in the opposite view.

Good and evil, according to this view, are different and opposed forces. If the opposition is imagined as existing between an absolute good will and an absolute bad (as for instance in Manichaeism) we have already shown that it cannot be maintained, for an absolute bad will is inconceivable. The crude antithesis of Manichaeism therefore gives place to a different kind of opposition, such as that between body and soul, desire and reason, matter and spirit, egoism and altruism, and so on *ad infinitum*. To criticise these in detail would be tedious ; it is perhaps enough to point out the fallacy which underlies all alike. That which acts is never one part of the self ; it is the whole self. It is

impossible to split up a man into two parts and ascribe his good actions to one part—his soul, his reason, his spirit, his altruistic impulses—and his bad actions to another. Each action is done by him, by his one indivisible will. Call that will anything you like ; say that his self is desire, and you must distinguish between right desires and wrong desires ; say that it is spirit, and you must add that spirit may be good or bad. The essence of his good acts is that he might have done a bad one : the essence of his bad, that he—the same he—might have done a good. It is impossible to distinguish between any two categories one of which is necessarily bad and the other necessarily good. We constantly try to do so ; we say, for instance, that it is wrong to yield to passion and right to act on principle. But either we beg the question by surreptitiously identifying passion with that which is wrong and principle with that which is right, or we must confess that passions may well be right and that principles are very often wrong. The moral struggle is not a struggle between two different elements in our personality ; for two different elements, just so far as they are different, cannot ever cross each other's path. What opposes desires for evil is not reason, but desires for good. What opposes egoism—a false valuation of oneself—is not altruism but, as Butler long ago pointed out, a higher egoism, a true valuation of oneself.

Evil, and therefore the Devil, is not a mere negation, not the shadow cast by the light of goodness. Nor is it identical with matter, body, desire, or any other single term of a quasi-Manichæan antithesis. It is something homogeneous with good, and yet not good ; neither the mere absence of goodness nor the mere presence of its opposite. We do evil not through lack of positive will, nor yet because we will something definitely and obviously different from good. The first alternative breaks down because doing wrong is a real activity of the will ; the second because doing wrong for the sake



of wrong, if it happens at all, is a very small part of the evil that actually exists.

It is surely the case that the immense majority of crimes are done under a kind of self-deception. We persuade ourselves that this act, which is generally considered a crime, is really when properly understood, or when seen in the light of our peculiar circumstances, a fine and praiseworthy act. Such a plea is not in itself wrong. It is a duty, indeed it is the spring of all moral advance, to criticise current standards of morality and to ask whether this may not be a case where the current rule fails to apply. But though this criticism is not necessarily wrong but is the very essence of right action, it is not necessarily right but is the very essence of evil. To set oneself against current beliefs and practices is the central characteristic of all heroes, and it is equally the central characteristic of all criminals; of Christ and of Lucifer. The difference is not psychological; it is not that the hero has noble and exalted sentiments while the criminal gives way to ignoble and debased passions. The essence of crime is the pride of Lucifer, the feeling of nobility and exaltation, of superiority to convention and vulgar prejudice. When we do wrong, we believe, or persuade ourselves, that the opinion which is really the right one, really the expression of moral truth, is a mere fiction or convention; and we represent ourselves as rebels and martyrs for a noble cause.

It may be that some crimes have not this characteristic. At times, perhaps, we act wrongly in the clear understanding that we are doing wrong, while still attaching the right meaning to that word. But when we say, "I know it is wrong, but I intend to do it," we generally mean by "wrong" that which is commonly called wrong; wrong in public opinion, but to our own superior understanding right. Or, what is really the same thing, we admit that it is "morally wrong" but hold that it has a value other than, and transcending, that of morality; a meaningless phrase if we recollect

that morality is simply that kind of value which actions possess, so that to judge them by another standard is impossible. Any other standard we apply is morality under another name.<sup>1</sup>

The essence of evil, then, is that it should set itself up not in opposition, open and proclaimed, to good as good ; but that it should set itself up to be the good, standing where it ought not in the holy place and demanding that worship which is due to good alone. Evil is not the absence of good nor yet the opposite of good ; it is the counterfeit of good.<sup>2</sup>

Now if this is so, it follows that nobody can be entirely and deliberately bad. To be enslaved by a counterfeit of goodness we must know goodness itself ; there must be an element of real good in a will before it can ever become evil. And that element of good persists throughout, and is the basis of all hopes of redemption. The force and life of evil comes from the positive experience of good which underlies the evil,

<sup>1</sup> People say, for instance, "So-and-so ought to think less about morality, and more about his neighbours' happiness," or the like. But this language means that to consult his neighbours' happiness is a moral duty which So-and-so has been neglecting. Here, as in the similar case of polemics against "morality," the word is misused for "that which people wrongly imagine to be morality." Those writers who expect or exhort mankind to develop into a life beyond good and evil do not quite realise that they regard it as a *good* thing to be "beyond good and evil." To believe that any standard is the right one to act upon implies believing, or rather is believing, that it is a moral standard.

<sup>2</sup> It goes without saying that counterfeit goods or false ideals, like true ones, are seldom the peculiar property of any one individual ; they are often, though of course not necessarily, common to a family or class or sex or nation. This fact has, however, no bearing on the point at issue ; and is only quoted here because of a false value very often attached to it. The ideals I act on are, wherever I get them from, mine ; that they should happen to be shared by others is irrelevant. But, it is said, I get them as a matter of fact from others ; I have them because others have them ; the influence of a corrupt public opinion is of the utmost importance in any concrete account of the evil will.—This language is so common that it is worth while to point out the fallacy it contains. It is another instance of a fictitious entity (in this case "Society") posing as the "explanation" of evil. The alleged explanation contains (1) a vicious circle and (2) a fatal gap. (1) "Society" consists of Tom, Dick and Harry : if I "get my ideals" from them, where do they "get" theirs from ? Presumably from me ; unless it is supposed that ideals never change at all, but are simply transmitted *en bloc* from generation to generation. (2) If other people's ideals are bad, they may on that account equally well reproduce themselves in me, or rouse me to reject them. Man's relation to his moral environment is just as much negative as affirmative ; and therefore no detail of his moral character can ever be explained by reference to such environment.

which alone makes evil possible. Therefore the Devil, just as he cannot will all the evil there is, cannot be fundamentally and perfectly wicked; he is not a wicked angel but a fallen angel, preserving in his fall the tattered remnants of the glory that was his, to be at once the foundation and the abatement of his badness. It is this contradiction in the nature of the evil will that Dante has in mind when, coming to the centre and heart of the *Inferno*, he finds its lord not triumphant, not proud and happy in his kingdom, but inconsolably wretched.

Con sei occhi piangeva, e per tre menti  
Gocciava 'l pianto e sanguinosa bava.<sup>1</sup>

And Milton knows that Satan's mind, in the thought of lost happiness and lasting pain, was filled with torments of huge affliction and dismay; confounded though immortal.

In these and kindred accounts of the Devil we recognise a very real and profound truth. But of what kind is this truth? Is it a true portrait of an actual, historical person called Lucifer or Satan who at some time in the remote past rose against God and set himself up as leader of an angelic rebellion? Or is it the true description of a real spirit who, whatever his past history, lives and rules the forces of evil now? Or lastly, is its truth mythical truth? Is Satan simply the type of all evil wills?

In answer to the first of these questions we can only say that such a thing may well have happened. There may have been, at some definite time in the past, war in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon and his angels. We know of countless people who have at various times set up false ideals of truth and of right, and have worshipped those false gods, instead of the true God. And it may be that there

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, c. xxxiv. lines 53-4. "With six eyes he wept, and down three chins trickled his tears and blood-stained slaver." Stained, that is, with the blood of the traitors whose limbs he was mangling. *Paradise Lost*, c. 1.

was once a person, not a human being but a being of some kind, whose rebellion was of surpassing magnitude and weight, like Arianism among the Christian heresies ; and that his name has somehow come down to us as Lucifer. If this is presented as mere history it is not possible to prove or disprove it. But in speaking of the fall of Lucifer do we really mean this, and only this ?

It would appear that we mean both more and less. Less, because we hardly believe that Lucifer's fall took place at any actual date. It was "before the beginning of the world" ; it has no definite place in our time-series. To ask its date seems incongruous, not because we have no evidence for dating it, but because we do not regard it as quite an event in history. But we also mean more ; for we regard Lucifer or the Devil not as a character in past history only, a pretender like Perkin Warbeck, but as a spiritual force about us here and now. His fall is somehow repeated and represented, not merely imitated, in the apparition and collapse of any great force working for evil. There may have been a historical Lucifer, but it is not he, it is no historical person simply as such, of whom we speak as the Devil.

Is he then the supreme evil power? Is he the Manichean anti-God whose spirit informs the communion of sinners as the Holy Spirit informs the communion of saints? No ; for we have already seen that there can be no supreme power which directs and controls all the forces of evil. That army is one without discipline, without a leader ; the throne of the kingdom of evil is empty, and its government is anarchy. Evil wills exist, but they owe no allegiance to any supreme spirit. They worship evil, they worship the Devil ; but their worship is idolatry because they themselves create its god. If the Devil were a real ruler, then worship of him would be within its limits a true religion ; but it is false religion, the worship of a phantom.

It remains that we should regard the Devil as a myth. This does not mean that the descriptions of him are untrue, or that they are the product of that fancy whose creations are neither true nor false but merely imaginary. A myth is capable of, and is judged by, a certain kind of truth. Mythology is to the naïve consciousness a form of history; the myth of Herakles to a simple-minded Greek was the biography of a real person. But, as such, it was false. Mythology does not contain historical truth, though it presents itself in a historical form. The truth it contains may perhaps be described as typical truth. Herakles is the type of all strong men who devote their strength to the bettering of human life; and the truth of the myth lies precisely in this, that the story truly presents the real character of the type. This is the difference between mythology and art, the work of the imagination. The mythical person is never quite an individual. He is always something of an abstraction, a type rather than a person. In art, on the other hand, the person is not a type but an individual. Hamlet is not typical of any class of men, as Herakles is; he is simply his unique self. An art which forgets the individual and presents the type, an art which generalises, has forgotten its artistic mission and has become mythology.

The Devil is in this sense a myth. He rebels against God and sets himself up for worship, because all evil is rebellion against the true good and the worship of false ideals, of counterfeit goods, of idols. He rules over the kingdom of darkness, and yet his rule is only a mockery, because there is no real unity in evil, though there is a fictitious and spurious unity. He is a laughing-stock to the saints, because evil once seen as evil has no more power over the mind; it only controls those who worship it, who reverence it as good. He torments souls in hell, and is himself tormented, because the evil will is divided against itself and can never reach the unity and harmony which alone characterise

the good. His strength lies in his infinite disguises ; he comes in countless alluring forms, which at the word of power vanish leaving his own naked horror of impotent rage, because evil is never seen as evil by its worshippers ; they clothe it in all the forms of beauty and sincerity and virtue, which must be torn away by the wind of truth leaving the idolater face to face with the reality of the thing he has worshipped till he turns from it in loathing. Christian demonology is a storehouse of observations, not as to the life-history of a single Devil or even of many devils, but as to the nature, growth and development of the evil will.

Are there, then, no spiritual forces which influence man for evil ? Are the malign spirits which surround us with temptations a mere mythological description of our own inner wickedness ?

There certainly are spiritual forces of evil. But by "spiritual" we do not necessarily mean other than human ; still less do we refer to a class of ambiguous beings sometimes physical and sometimes "dematerialised" ; the "spirits" of vulgar superstition. There may be personal minds other than those we know as God, man and the lower animals ; and if so, they are doubtless good or bad. But, as we saw, no such beings need be postulated to account for human sin ; nor would they account for it, if they existed. The spirits whose evil we know are human spirits ; and the forces of evil with which we are surrounded are the sins of this human world. The Devil is an immanent spirit of evil in the heart of man, as God is an immanent spirit of goodness. But there is this great difference, that God is transcendent also, a real mind with a life of His own, while the Devil is purely immanent, that is, considered as a person, non-existent.

Nor is it even entirely true to say that the Devil is immanent. For that would imply that evil is a principle one and the same in all evil acts ; and this it cannot be, for while good acts all form part of one

whole of goodness, evil acts have no parallel unity. There is no communion of sinners ; they live not in communion with one another, but in mutual strife. There is not one immanent Devil, but countless immanent devils, born in a moment and each in a moment dying to give place to another, or else to that re-entering spirit of good which is always one and the same.

The devils within us are our own evil selves. But this does not mean that they cannot come, in a sense, from without. When one man infects another with his own badness, it is quite literal truth to say that a devil goes from one to the other ; and there may be a kind of unity, a kind of momentary kingdom of evil, when the same devil seizes upon a large number of people and they do in a crowd things which no man would do by himself. There may even be a more lasting kingdom where an institution or a class keeps alive for generations a false ideal. And since evil influences may affect us from books, from places, from the weather, we tend naturally to think of devils as inhabiting these things. Are we here back again in mythology? There really is a devil—a spirit of evil—in a bad person ; is there one, in the same sense, in a wood or in the east wind ?

It is a difficult question to answer, since it depends on how far each of these things has a self, and how far the selfhood which to us it seems to have is really conferred upon it by our own thought. To us the east wind is a definite thing ; and so to us it can be a devil. But is it a definite thing to itself? Is the influence it exerts upon us its own influence, or is it only the reflexion in it of our own nature? Perhaps it is best to leave the question open. There may be devils in places and in things which we generally regard as inanimate ; but those which we know exist in the human mind. Of these the Devil of orthodoxy is a type or myth ; a myth not in the colloquial sense in which the word means a fiction or illusion, but in the

proper sense which we have explained above. And the truth of the orthodox belief consists in the fact that it does with perfect accuracy describe the real nature of the evil will. But as soon as the mythical nature of the belief is forgotten, as soon as the Devil is taken not as a type of all evil wills but as their actual supreme ruler, then the step has been taken from truth to superstition, from Christianity to Manichaeism.

How does all this affect the theory and practice of prayer? "The Devil" in any given case is simply the person who is sinning; the wickedness into which he has made himself. Therefore devil-worship is first and primarily self-worship. Self-worship is not necessarily bad; the "religion of humanity" may mean the worship of God as revealed in and through human goodness. But in that case it is not mere self-worship, but the worship of the God immanent in ourselves. Worship of the self pure and simple must always be devil-worship, for it is only the bad self that can be called self pure and simple. The good self is always something more than self; it is self informed and directed by the spirit of God. Man is only alone in the world when he has expelled the spirit of God from his heart and lives a life of evil; for there is no great central power of evil upon which he can then depend as in the alternative case he depends on God. The vacant sanctuary can only be filled with an idol created by man for his own worship; and this idol is the Brocken-spectre on the fog, the gigantic shadow of man himself when he turns away from the sunlight.

Idolatry, self-worship and devil-worship are one and the same thing; and they are identical with evil in general. For that false ideal which, in evil, takes the place due to the true ideal or God, is always our self, or rather a magnified reflexion of our self. Intellectual evil consists in setting up that which I believe as the standard of truth, whereas I ought rather to test and



if necessary reject my beliefs by comparing them with reality. Moral evil consists not so much in yielding to desires which I know to be wrong as in erecting my moral standards and judgments into the sole test of rightness. In every case alike evil arises when man takes himself, exactly as he stands, for the measure of all things; for in that case he is setting up a god in his own image and worshipping idols.

True religion lies not in making God in our image, but in making ourselves in God's image; for God alone exists, and man is only struggling into existence for good or evil. In order to attain to any existence worth having, we must bear in mind that truth, reality, God, are real things existing quite independently of our individual life and private opinions; and an opinion is no less private if it happens to be shared by the whole human race. The type of all false religion is to believe what we will to believe, instead of what we have ascertained to be true; supposing that reality must be such as to satisfy our desires, and if not, go to, let us alter it. This is no ultimate, inexplicable fact; it follows necessarily from the truth that man's nature is as yet unformed, incomplete; it is, in the great phrase of an English philosopher,<sup>1</sup> "in process of being communicated to him"; and in that incomplete shape it is incapable of being the standard of anything. It is itself in need of a standard, and that standard, which for science is Reality, for religion is God.

Man's life is a becoming; and not only becoming, but self-creation. He does not grow under the direction and control of irresistible forces. The force that shapes him is his own will. All his life is an effort to attain to real human nature. But human nature, since man is at bottom spirit, is only exemplified in the absolute spirit of God. Hence man must shape himself in God's image, or he ceases to be even human and becomes diabolical. This self-creation must also be

<sup>1</sup> T. H. Green.

self-knowledge ; not the self-knowledge of introspection, the examination of the self that is, but the knowledge of God, the self that is to be. Knowledge of God is the beginning, the centre and end, of human life.

A painter makes his picture perfect by looking back from moment to moment at the vision which he is trying to reproduce. A scientist perfects his theory by testing it at every point by the facts of nature. So the religious life must come back again and again to the contemplation of its ideal in God. But God is a person, not a thing ; a mind, not an object. We contemplate objects, but we do not contemplate persons. The attitude of one mind to another is not contemplation but communion ; and communion with God is prayer. Prayer may not be the whole of religion, but it is the touchstone of it. All religion must come to the test of prayer ; for in prayer the soul maps out the course it has taken and the journey it has yet to make, reviewing the past and the future in the light of the presence of God.



XIV

PRAYER FOR THE DEAD

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "PRO CHRISTO ET ECCLESIA "

## SYNOPSIS

It is a natural instinct to desire the welfare of our beloved dead, and it is not only our right, but our duty, to lay all our wants before God.

We neither have, nor can have, any knowledge of the condition in which souls exist beyond the grave.

The assumption that spirit can exist without material expression has no more evidence in its support than the imaginative speculations which would carry the conditions of this world into the next.

But the knowledge of the character of God which is the revelation of Christianity implies a certain everlasting relation of human souls to Him and to one another.

This relation is best approached from the standpoint of our thought of the unity of humanity.

Historic and scientific evidence pointing to the unity of the race.

Man is found to be essentially social ; he is developed by society, and in the highest human spiritual development exhibits the most social characteristics.

It may be inferred from this that the immortal life is social, and is not unaffected by the conditions of social life on earth. The two societies are bound by ties of love, our supreme intuition being that "love is stronger than death."

The intuitions of the Hebrew prophets and the teaching of our Lord affirm the social character of the future life.

The question whether the whole human race will be saved.

In any case the social virtues are necessary to salvation.

Further evidence from reasonable inference and New Testament teaching, that the blessed dead await the renovation and perfecting of earth before they themselves can be "made perfect."

If so, all we do to ennoble the earth life benefits also the blessed society beyond.

As grief and joy are persistent elements in our life, so the blessed dead may experience true bliss while they share God's grief over the ill conditions of earth.

Reciprocally, their slower or faster progress may hinder or help us.

As such hindrance is possible, we need to commit to God all our relation to them, and think of them and ourselves as interrelated only through the medium of the Divine Spirit.

## XIV

### PRAYER FOR THE DEAD

ONCE a little child knelt daily at his mother's knee and prayed, "Great God, bless father and mother this day, and my sisters and brothers, and all my dear friends, for Jesus' sake." Then he got up believing that fresh help for his friends was imparted by his prayer. Sixty years after, a man ripe in years and judgment, immersed in public work, paused a moment before beginning each day and repeated within his heart his childhood's prayer ; and still he felt that each day something had been accomplished, some new blessing had fallen on those he loved—father, mother, sisters, brothers, dear friends, nearly all of them long passed into the unseen. If prayer be availing, if God be fatherly in His relation to us, if God change not with our changes, those whom this man had loved in his childhood must have been continually blest by his faith. What influence except the crudest superstition could make any one forbid such prayer ?

One day a lady, thoughtful and prayerful, went to visit a wise old man, and she said, "I cannot see any good in prayer for departed souls. Are they not gone into God's keeping ? Will He not do for them the utmost that His love and power can do ?" The old man replied, "They are in God's keeping : He will do the utmost that His love and power can do." So the lady went away. Ten years after she came back, and said to

the old man, "All my life I have prayed for my friends, on earth, but now I begin to realise that such prayer is futile and even an insult to God, for are we not all in His keeping? Will He not do for each one of us each day what is best and kindest?" The old man replied, "I have been waiting for you to come and say this. We are all in His keeping. He will do for us each day all that He can do. I advise you to go home, dear lady, and cease your prayers." Very soon she came to him again, but the beauty had faded from her cheek and the light from her eyes, and she said, "I have taken your advice, but I am most miserable. I feel that I am unfaithful to my friends. I have lost the sense of God's blessing." Then the old man said, "Your distress proves that your prayers were acts of faith in God's love. Had they been the supplications of doubt, you would have been better off without them. When you prayed for your friends, the faith of your prayer each day opened a channel by which God's blessing could descend upon them and upon you. Begin again, and by your prayers enable God to give greater blessings to your friends upon earth, and also to those who have passed into the unseen, for we are all one family."

We neither have nor can have knowledge of the conditions in which souls exist beyond the grave. As far as we imagine them we are bound to imagine them as if they were in our own conditions of time and space, for our imaginations have no other form. Again, if they could speak with us, as some affirm they do, we could only understand them if they spoke, and therefore they could only speak, in the symbols or figures of earth, thus conveying to us no more of their present thought and knowledge than could be conveyed in such symbols. We have therefore no reason either to assert that they have passed beyond the conditions of time and space which limit our thought, or to imagine—what is more common—that they have not. Who can affirm that the content of any vision of heaven, or

purgatory, or hell is more than a symbol of the reality? Who can guess how many stages may be between our present condition and that of pure spirit, if that be our goal? Who, indeed, can assert that spirit can ever exist without that form of creative activity which clothes it in body?

For many ages it has been the habit of philosophic religious thought to conceive of matter as antithetical to spirit, something which the spirit must slough off before it can perfectly exercise itself and commune with God. This conception is certainly not implied in—is surely hardly consonant with—belief in God as creator of the universe. If Divine thought, in creating, expresses itself in forms that we call material as well as in forms spiritual, it is perhaps more natural to assume that it is eternally creative of material form, and that in so far as created spirits are made in the likeness of the Eternal Spirit they have some share in the power to create material form. If so, it may be that to clothe themselves in some material form will for ever be a necessary part of their self-expression. This would seem to agree with St. Paul's visionary glimpse of a "spiritual body" for those gone beyond earth, which may have been an intuition of truth. It does not follow that such a body would ever be perceptible to the senses of men in this earthly life, although possibly it may have been the supreme moral achievement of our Lord Jesus Christ to make it so upon a few rare occasions. Incidentally it may be remarked that this latter view of matter as a sacred thing, an eternal temple of the Eternal Spirit—the view that regards matter and material conditions as something to be transformed and glorified, not abolished—appears to produce in men here and now a different ethical outlook, and one more in accordance with our Lord's confident prayer that God's will shall be done upon earth, than does the view that a material creation is something to be condemned and done away with before true blessed-



ness can be enjoyed. All that I wish to point out here is that, in spite of much dogmatic assumption, on the one side concerning the physical resurrection of our human bodies, and on the other concerning the transient nature of God's creative activity in matter, we cannot in the nature of things know anything of the conditions of the next life.

But our present total inability to know the circumstances under which departed souls live does not affect our knowledge of their relation to God, and ours to them through Him. That knowledge is grounded on our knowledge of the character of God which is the revelation of Christianity ; and it carries important and far-reaching implications as to the eternal relationship of souls to Him and to one another. Hence, if we believe that God exists as Christ reveals Him, that men are related as Christ taught us that we are, and that the self or soul or spirit—whatever we choose to call it—of each fellow-creature still consciously lives, we are impelled to consider our attitude, and indeed our duty, to this great host of our fellows, and to our own beloved amongst them.

The question of our relation to our beloved dead, or indeed to all those human souls living beyond the gate of death, is best approached from the standpoint of our thought of the unity of the race. For if we and they and future generations are in some real sense parts of one organic community, their welfare is dependent upon ours and our welfare upon theirs. Science and history, even the last word of modern archaeology, have been bringing home to us this unity of the race as it exists on earth more and more forcibly in practical ways.

See the truth of this in both our physical and our mental life. No human being has ever lived on earth without contributing to the health or disease, the physical strength or weakness, of mankind. The germs of disease pass from man to man, and become

more virulent or decrease according to the health of the subject. For example, at one time influenza passed from Africa to Cathay, from Cathay to every court and hovel in Europe, not only changing the environment of human souls for one generation, but altering the physical inheritance of millions upon millions. And this commerce in disease and health is true always, everywhere, even when there is no dramatic manifestation of it. The healthy man radiates health to his companions ; the diseased man debilitates his companions ; and the accidents of health and disease have their reflex action upon the virtues and vices developed by the immortal soul. We ourselves are influencing the future race in this way. Thus are we all of one flesh.

Again, no man or woman on this earth originates a thought or passes on an idea without affecting the corporate mind of the race. We see this clearly in the written word, in oral tradition, in that subtle influence that springs from mind to mind in corporate manias and spiritual awakenings ; but in less conspicuous ways it goes on always, everywhere. The very texture of our thought, its enlargement, its limitations, are due in part to prehistoric men and women we know not how far removed in time and place. Where they settled, how they mated, what they fed on, what they worshipped—all their judgments and discoveries have affected us, as the marshes through which a stream travels near its source affect the composition of its water to the end. In historic times we are accustomed to realise with wonder how greatly the human mind was formed by a Confucius, a Plato, a Copernicus, a Bismarck ; but we do not sufficiently dwell on the thought that such men were what they were, thought as they did, because of the intellectual activity and moral judgments of many unknown forefathers and mothers. In the study of family generations where they are known to us it is seen that the elements of greatness can often be traced to a most obscure source.

The sin and death that each man can entail upon the world, the righteousness and life that each man can impart, are by us immeasurable. Thus there is a very real sense in which the whole human family, past and present, is seen to be one, both physically and mentally.

Further, we now have reason to believe that every community is a psychic organism, not of course possessing a single centre of consciousness, but yet in some mysterious way having a mind, will and feeling of its own, not identical with the mind, will and feeling of any individual who is a part of it. Thus a regiment, a school, or a city has a soul of its own. Nations are larger instances of such organisms. The reality and the specific qualities of different national souls are obvious to all: but there are also facts which suggest the view that humanity as a whole is also such an organism. For example, in literature we see that nations, quite separate from one another, pass through similar phases of thought and feeling. We are so accustomed to emphasise the national aspect of our literature that we are apt to forget that our folklore points to a common world inheritance, that all developing nations have had their periods of epic, of romance, of dramatic activity; and the more intimately we know the literature of other continents and of the ancient world, the more we realise how universal is the appeal of every great expression of fundamental human need and aspiration. In science the same hypothesis has sprung to birth in different countries at the same time. Economic development, even in widely differing conditions, runs through similar stages. All religions that live are the corporate possession of some community, large or small; and all the great missionary religions imply in their followers the belief that their religion is adapted to the common needs of the entire race of men. Such widespread phenomena suggest the existence of a common race soul, of which they are the expression. Again, we have the evidence of investigations that go

far to establish the existence of telepathic communication between man and man, communication which apparently passes easily between, *e.g.*, a Negro and a Highlander.

What inference may fairly be drawn from this physical and mental unity of the race on earth by those who believe in man's personal immortality?

In the first place, if we believe that creation is of God and that His purpose is not baffled, we shall naturally believe that the essential features of that creation are the outward and temporal expression of some eternal reality. Now the essential thing about man's development here is that his personality, his very individuality, requires a society to produce it. It is man that develops man; and the more perfect man's understanding of man the greater man becomes. False hopes and false ideals at times have led men to seek greatness Godward by neglecting their fellow-beings, but historic evidence goes to show that if a man be truly great as a mystic he becomes great also in the affairs of men, and slowly the world has realised—what Jesus Christ affirmed—that he who is most saintly is also most neighbourly. The inference is, surely, that when the soul goes upon its supreme adventure into another state of being, progress is along the line of greater neighbourliness, and that, being a human soul, it will still find material for development in the environment of human souls, and will still aid in their development.

But if this be true of all human souls who have found an immortal life in the beyond, if each has sought to make a human circle in its new condition, these circles will overlap and interlace until the whole be welded together by ties of help and gratitude, by ties of affinity and affection. If, indeed, men go out into this other state without neighbourliness—isolated, selfish—they would perhaps naturally remain alone, even though surrounded by derelicts of their own kind.

It is interesting in this connection to note that a lack of natural affection is now classified as mental deficiency. We may question whether a life in which no social act has been performed rises to the human level. In such souls is not humanity extinct? But if only some spark of neighbour impulse be there, they would perhaps be the care of those in whom humanity was more highly developed. Let us take the parable of Dives and Lazarus to illustrate this. Dives is evidently a type of that large class of people whose selfishness embraces a larger self than the mere individual self. The strict egoist is probably abnormal, falling into a class below those persons gifted with the normal mental outfit of average humanity; but the man or woman whose social impulses are strictly limited by the larger self of family or clan or class or nation is very common. Those who cultivate this habit of mind can never feel with, never see with the eyes of, never properly comfort and cherish, the Lazarus that lies at their gates. This habit of mind is anti-social; it is the force that splits up humanity into its miserable divisions and perpetuates feuds and grudges and class warfare. The concern of Dives for his brethren was very great; though in torment, he was able to entreat for their salvation. He displays family selfishness. It is difficult for us to believe that the flame that tormented Dives symbolises anything but the desolation of the anti-social soul that finds itself beyond the reach and the glamour of those earthly goods which have blinded it to the psychic deformity it has been contracting. Out of touch with the highest, unable to conceive, much less to enjoy, the freedom of souls whose love and sympathy is in harmony with that of the All-Father, it is possible that its shame and desolation may last very long before it develops—if ever—spiritual health, and experiences the true freedom of the sons of God. Yet we cannot but think there is something in the care of Dives for his brethren that might develop into the largeness of heart that

would share all he possesses with Lazarus ; and if, as we believe, the next life is social, we can conceive this good developed in two ways—by the help of other souls who had attained greater liberation, and by his own efforts to bring greater enlightenment to his own brethren. At present I am seeking merely to discover what is the reasonable inference from the fact that a human being is essentially social : it is, I think, that, to whatever conditions immortality may introduce him, he must, if he remain a conscious self, be bound up in the bundle of life with all immortal human souls.

From this I think there is a further reasonable inference, and that is that as the society in which the departed live is for ever receiving additions from this world, the conditions in which these come—their development or non-development—must be of importance to that immortal society ; and thus the progress or retrogression, the social or anti-social nature, of societies on earth, cannot be to them a matter of indifference. In fact it must be impossible for them to be made perfect “without us,” *i.e.* until humanity is perfected.

If now we turn to the great intuitions of the human heart and the great visions of the religious mood at its highest, we find the corroboration of these reasonable inferences. It is always when life is too hard for the flowers of the heart to bloom, or religion too stereotyped to make progress, that priest and moralist have formed conceptions of solitary perfection and narrow, limited societies and static virtues. When the heart of humanity is unstified what is its great intuition concerning life and death ? Is it not that “love is stronger than death” ? The dying mother with her weeping babes around her feels that she knows—has always, where personality is developed, felt that she knows—that the last act of the little drama of her passionate tenderness for them is not being enacted. The father dying to save his wife and children from slavery knows,

and when personality has been developed has always known, wordlessly, half-consciously perhaps, that their safety is also his welfare. And lovers down all the ages, over all the world, at the height of their love have known that "death is nought and love is all," that this is far more real than any visible or tangible reality.

Thus, believing in an immortal life, the very depth of our conviction that love is stronger than death drives us to believe that the whole great society of human beings beyond death are bound together in one indissoluble bond; for the ties of family affection link the generations together and stretch themselves from household to household across the breadth of each generation. Shall the self-sacrificing mother again rejoice in the friendship of her beloved child? But he, grown to man's estate, has sacrificed himself in his turn for wife and child. His child will seek in the immortal life a father but again will also seek a child. Men have too often talked of the intuition that love is stronger than death as if it only applied in special cases—each of us selecting a few—but if it applies at all it applies to vast hosts of friends and lovers, brothers and sisters, parents and children, and binds them together in one deathless bond, a bond in which we too, yes, and children's children, are already bound.

So far we have questioned the voice of reason and the voice of the heart. What of the voice of our religion? We shall find it corroborates what reason and heart have affirmed. The Hebrew religious hope, when taken at its highest level, contained faith in two future goods—the immortality of the personal soul, and the regeneration of society on earth. The Messianic Kingdom of the Apocalyptic vision wherein righteousness, peace and goodwill triumphantly prevail, was thought of as a society to be established on a renovated earth, but an earth to which the righteous dead had returned in a glorious resurrection. This symbolism our Lord Him-

self appears to endorse—"They shall come . . . and sit with Abraham. . . ." The New Testament vision of the Kingdom of God, in thus blending together two such different conceptions as that of personal immortality for the individual in a glorified "body" or mode of existence, and the social regeneration of this world, seems at first sight a confusion of ideas, but if we look below the surface it involves a truth that is of great importance to our present subject, viz. that the personal immortal life must necessarily be a corporate life. Certainly in our New Testament records the social character of the life beyond is set forth by many figures; the chief of these—"the Kingdom"—clearly represents a social community.

But the question must be asked, How far does the doctrine of the Kingdom, taught in Gospels and Epistles, coincide with the doctrine of racial unity? We find in the New Testament a wavering of opinion as to whether the whole human race is going forward into the Kingdom or not. In 1 Tim. iv. 10 we have a passage which seems to epitomise this wavering: "It is a sure word, it deserves all praise, that 'we toil and strive because our hope is fixed on the living God, the Saviour of all men'—and of believers in particular." This is Dr. Moffatt's translation, but the meaning, as far as concerns our point, is the same in other translations. Clearly the writer of this must have been familiar with a doctrine that divided men into saved and lost, and seems to have thought that the lost would be ultimately included in a larger salvation. At times St. Paul appears to grasp salvation as more than a human—a cosmic—thing, embracing not only the whole of humanity but the whole of creation. We have the familiar passage in Rom. viii. in which "the whole creation" is represented as groaning for a salvation which is sure to come. In Col. i. 19-20 we get the striking words, "For it was in him that the divine fullness willed to settle without limit, and by him it willed to reconcile



in his own person all on earth and in heaven alike, in a peace made by the blood of his cross." Again, in Eph. i. 10, we have, "All things in heaven and earth alike shall be gathered up in Christ." Or again, in 1 Cor. xv. 27-28, "God has put everything under his feet. . . . Then the Son himself will be put under him who put everything under him, so that God may be everything to every one." Again, we have in the Fourth Gospel the statement, "God did not send his Son into the world to pass sentence on it, but to save the world by him." Against these passages we have to set many in Gospels, in Epistles and in the Apocalypse in which the doom of exile from the Kingdom or "beloved community" is pronounced on sinners. To the question of Luke xiii. 23, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Jesus is reported to have given an answer of which the main point is that those who, judged by earthly standards, appear most to merit salvation are often most likely to miss it—a passage which certainly teaches that a variety of souls may never have a share in the eternal commonwealth. Perhaps we may find a solution of the apparent contradiction if we infer that our Lord held that the one thing which could finally prevent the entrance of any into eternal life is an anti-social disposition. Compare, for example, the judgment of the nations in Matt. xxv. and such passages as Luke vii. 48, xvii. 1-4, xxii. 25-27, and parallel passages, the parable of Dives and Lazarus, and that remarkable clause in the Lord's Prayer that implies that only those who from their hearts exercise the highest function of the social life can be forgiven of God.

As, then, the social virtues are necessary to the attainment of "life" or "eternal life," the souls of the blessed who leave this earth are not to be thought of as winging a solitary way through heavenly spaces to reach an individual glory near the throne of God, but rather as joining a company, a festive host, the

members of which are not only all related to one another through their relation to God and His Christ, but are already bound by direct ties of compassion and gratitude to their fellow-men.

This conclusion is in no way weakened by the impression left by the Gospel narratives of the extraordinary value set by our Lord upon each individual soul, however apparently lost or degraded, and by the constant emphasis in His teaching on the fact that every soul in each of its acts and states is precious to God and the object of His special care. For while this is true, it remains also true that the figures by which the state of the saved is represented in the Gospels set it forth either as a social function or as a living organism. The whole company of those alive to God are represented as a "vine" or a "flock," or as merry-makers at a feast.

If this be true, what is our relation to the great host of those who are beyond the veil, and especially to those among them whom we love?

However blessed, however blissful, their condition may be, it is impossible to think that their life can be as full and complete as if the evil of earth were done away, for one reason already mentioned, that their company is constantly being recruited by fresh souls whose moral development has been conditioned by their life on earth. Again, whether or not they are conscious of happenings on earth, they are members of one organic community of which we also are members. In a physical organism the health of the whole is regulated by the health of the weakest part; in a nation the poor and needy, the plague-stricken and thriftless, are a tax on the whole community. Moral weakness also drags down the whole, *e.g.* Prussian militarism has produced a kindred spirit in all the nations. The welfare of the departed must bear some relation to our welfare; we cannot say any good thing, think any good thought, without helping them; we cannot think any evil without

injuring them—so much would seem to be involved in the moral and religious unity of the race.

One evident way in which those on earth must affect the world beyond is illustrated by the graphic picture in the Gospel of the entrance of the beggar Lazarus into the blessed community. That community is affected by his advent, for the place given to him must be of importance. Then again, the agonising prayer of Dives follows him, and enters into the atmosphere of the blessed life. It is a mere picture, yet does not reason say that it is symbolic of a fact? We believe that here we live and move and have our being in God; we do not question the fact that those who pass into the life beyond also have their being in Him. Yet here our lives are profoundly modified by the good and the evil in personalities about us, and by their emotions of joy and sorrow; and every hour the souls of men pass over, and the lives of those to whose company they go must in some like way be affected by their character and condition. Knowing that all we are and do affects our fellows here, we can see that our actions, thoughts, prayers, affecting the social life here, will, through the medium of passing souls, affect the social life beyond.

There may, however, be a more direct way in which we influence the spiritual welfare of the dead. We have seen that deeply imbedded in the Gospel is the hope of the renovation of earth and the establishment of a perfect earthly state. The great Hebrew prophets had held out this hope, had affirmed this promise in the name of the Lord, and Jesus seems to have taken it from them and added His own promise to theirs. Do we sufficiently realise that it was for this belief that our Lord died? Had He been willing to give up His belief in the glorious re-formation of earthly affairs in the Messianic Kingdom He need not have died. His conviction that His earthly sense of sonship to God must be made good by the power to regulate the affairs

of men in a sinless future on earth brought Him to the Cross. That many of His followers with high professions have lightly given up battle for the earthly paradise for which He died does not make it less obligatory on us. It was on earth He promised to reign. He taught His disciples the aspiration that God's will should be done on earth. From many of His sayings it appears that He argued that, as the Heavenly Father's purpose in His earthly creation must be wholly good, it must sooner or later become manifest and be realised.

The generations hitherto have had no experience of an earth life which justified a Divine Creator. It may be that to see this earthly perfection and participate in its joy is a necessary stage in the heavenly progress of the soul. Dante certainly thought it was, and placed the Earthly Paradise between Purgatory and the bliss of Heaven. We should do ill to set aside not only the belief of such great teachers of other times, but also the simplest, plainest meaning of so many of our Lord's sayings.

It would certainly appear reasonable to suppose that the cleansing and upbuilding of sinful souls in the next state takes place through their efforts to redeem the human society either on earth or beyond, and bring it into obedience to Christ for participation in His earthly victory. Such participation in that victory would be not only the end of their own trials but the sign that they too were at last in harmony with God.

But, whether necessary for the perfecting of souls or not, it is evident that the whole human race must in some way share in the coming renovation of earth. It was the poetic justice of this which caused the Hebrews to formulate their doctrine of resurrection. We who realise how our spirits live in memories of childhood as well as in hopes of the future, and how inestimable is the range of thought, can easily realise how our spirits could participate in an earthly reign of righteousness without such bodily limitations as a resumption of the present body implies.

If the dead await the renovation of earth, it follows that everything we do to make earth's future generations greater and better than ourselves is done also directly for the benefit of all past generations, is done for all who have passed into the deathless life ; nor can we, in seeking to make the men of the future more noble, neglect to improve material conditions, for, on earth at least, body and soul are bound together, and a spiritual development that does not manifest itself in material conditions of beauty and order and utility is not a wholesome development.

Again, there is a third way in which all that we do and are must affect the dead. We believe that in that other state men will experience the good results of all that has been good in their lives. Now the grace of God in His creation is such that men cannot think a good thought, or do well in any way, without acquiring a sensitiveness to the joy of God which alone is in us the power of true enjoyment. It follows from this that such grief as God feels for the sin and suffering of men will give them pain. (We speak of the joy and grief of God symbolically ; we are forced thus to think of Him in His relation to us.) Thus in proportion as the departed are good, their joy is dependent upon God's ; in so far as God's will shall be done on earth it will give them joy, and evil on earth must give them pain, whether they know the cause of this pain and joy or not.

But it may be objected, if the company of those who have gone before is affected for better or worse by the actions of those on earth, where is the security, where is the happiness, of the blessed dead ? The problem is a real one. But it by no means follows because they are seriously affected by the evil on earth that they cannot be regarded as possessing happiness, though perhaps not as yet the highest attainable happiness.

There are many people who use the word "paradox "

as a convenient bag into which to pack their unwillingness or their inability to think ; but if we will take the trouble to observe the daily life about us and meditate upon its significance, we shall find there is nothing more common than that grief and joy should meet in the human soul. There is no paradox in such a statement. Two opposite emotions may not meet in any one moment of consciousness, but are constant elements and persistent elements in one life. Such a soul, probably not knowing to what height joy could rise did it lose its companion, grief, may be wholly satisfied in the joy it realises because ignorant of the magnificent discipline of a richer joy, while Heaven alone knows how it is hampered and held down, not by its emotion of grief, but by the cause of grief. If such cases may be seen everywhere on earth, it is absurd for us to deny that the life of blessed souls in another state may be intensely joyful while they experience sorrow for the world and are hampered and hindered in their development by the evil causes of that sorrow.

It is evident that if we stand in this close connection with those in the life beyond, their condition may also affect ours even before we join them. They do not all pass thither with characters ripe in wisdom and mercy and truth. They were all sinners as we are sinners, unconscious or half-conscious of the worst that is in us. Their lives must be healed and amended, as ours must be healed and amended, as ours will still need to be healed and amended when we too perhaps have drunk deep draughts of the water of life and been lifted by the grace of God nearer the goal. For just as grief is consonant with joy in the unity of a single life, so evil is consonant with good. We believe that those beyond bear the character or self that they bore here, and develop upon the lines of that character ; we do not conceive even the ripest and holiest character to pass from earth with any finality of wisdom and grace. If, then, there is any actual

communion between them and us as they make faster or slower progress—or what we symbolically call fast or slow progress—in the knowledge of God, it is possible they may help or hinder us. The power of some of them to help has been—under one form or another—a cherished dream of mankind in many generations.

But if they may help it would seem to follow that they may also hinder, and that it behoves us to commit our relations to them entirely to God. Have we care concerning them? Are we not told to cast all our care upon God? Have we desires on their behalf? Is not the Apostle's exhortation sound, to lay all our desires before God? Do we long unspeakably to have our sense of blank ignorance and loss changed to some richer faith and nobler comfort? Have we not the promise that to ask is to receive, to seek is to find, and to knock is to have some door opened? It is probable that we cannot do a thing more foolish, more detrimental to ourselves, more grieving to God, than to cherish any desire or doubt, hope or fear, that we do not confide to His attention and help. If this is done with frankness and with affiance in the Divine love, we may know that to each will come that feeling and faith concerning those in the other world which will lead to right action. If it is possible that those we have loved and lost from sight can aid and refresh us, we shall experience this. If those we love are in need of our help, being still holden with the chain of their sins, we shall be moved to give that help.

If this unity of human generations, past, present and to be, is a reality, then the relation that binds us to the dead is such that we cannot live the religious life without praying for them in indirect ways. All good that can come to us or our fellows must be their good. We cannot, then, pray without praying for what will benefit them. If it be true that to labour is to

pray, we cannot labour for any good end without our work being a prayer for them as well as for us. The thought of this will surely lead us all to realise that the true religious life would seem to imply also direct prayer to God for departed souls.





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